

Time of Blessing

COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY 1976-1986

Time of Hope

J. DAVISON PHILIPS

Time of blessing, time of
hope

It has been said that each generation builds on foundations laid by those who have gone before them. Nowhere is that more evident than in churches and seminaries. This short book is an account of how my predecessor, Davison Philips, faithfully and effectively built on foundations laid by those who preceded him at Columbia. His strong faith, his commitment to the church, his vision for the seminary, his winsome personality, his sense of humor, and his firm hand are all reflected in these pages.

Under Davison's leadership the faculty was strengthened, enrollment increased, new programs were begun in response to the needs of the church, the seminary's relations with Presbyterian congregations in the Southeast was enhanced, and the endowment was substantially enlarged.

Columbia Seminary made tremendous gains under his leadership as president, and we are grateful to God for the firm foundations he laid and upon which we now have the privilege to build.

DOUGLAS W. OLDENBURG
President
Columbia Theological Seminary




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Philips, J. Davison.

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*To my wife Kay,
who shared fully in the life and
ministry of Columbia Seminary*

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Preface

"History will be kind to you, Sir Winston," a colleague remarked to Winston Churchill near the end of his career. "So it will," he replied, "for I intend to write it!" Not everyone could be as confident as that, and I certainly am not. In any event, in response to an invitation from the archives committee of Columbia's faculty, I present these reflections on the time of my presidency between November 1975 and January 1987.

The material is intentionally personal. Others have written objectively and substantively about issues faced by those of us involved in theological education. These reflections are my own, and I take full responsibility for them. On balance, however, Frederick Buechner is on target when, after describing so vividly his "sacred journey," he confesses "there is nothing like talking about yourself to loosen your tongue!"¹

Near the end of his life, President J. McDowell Richards gave us a concise summary of his recollections of thirty-nine years of history at Columbia Theological Seminary. The book had an appropriate title, *As I Remember It*. A more appropriate title for these memoirs may be *As I THINK I Remember It!* What I do remember with gratitude is that my years at Columbia were a *Time of Blessing, Time of Hope*.

Acknowledgements

No one could have had more support and encouragement than I had as president of Columbia Theological Seminary. The process of recalling many of these persons has focused my gratitude. I express my thanks to Katherine Wright Philips, my wife and constant support and guide in our fifty years of ordained ministry. (During my service overseas as a Navy chaplain during World War II, Kay was one of the first two women students enrolled at Columbia.) My colleagues among the faculty and staff at Columbia were faithful and creative associates in our mission. Peggy Matthews Rowland, president's secretary, came with me from Decatur Presbyterian Church and had a splendid new chapter in her career. In the preparation of this manuscript, I received valuable assistance from our daughter-in-law, Donna Cowley Philips.

James D. Newsome and T. Erskine Clarke of the faculty archives committee initiated the idea, consulted with me often, and encouraged me when I was most discouraged. President Douglas W. Oldenburg supported the effort continuously. Betty Bowen Cousar brought the manuscript up to a usable condition with her excellent editorial work. A special word of thanks to Juliette Harper, who not only worked on the layout but has solved numerous technical problems in moving from manuscript to final copy.

The board of directors, president's advisory council, alumni/ae council, our graduates throughout the world, and that diverse group of students in our degree programs were all essential to the fulfillment of our great mission. The larger seminary community of the Atlanta Theological Association which included Candler School of Theology, the Interdenominational Theological Center, Erskine Theological Seminary, and Columbia were a nurturing consortium.

The common ventures of the five theological institutions of the Presbyterian Church U.S. included consultations and planning with their presidents and deans. After reunion, there were eleven of us and a broader consultation and planning process.

With its cycle of accreditation visits, the Association of Theological Schools stimulated careful evaluation and projections.

The metropolitan area of Atlanta with its more than three million people, its 122 Presbyterian churches, and its excellent educational resources matched by booming economic development made our location a very good one. The Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, where I have served forty-two years, was supportive in every way. Dr. William A. Adams, the presbytery executive, an alumnus and at one

time chairman of the board, invested a great deal of time and counsel on an all too frequent basis. (When I confronted Bill with problems while we were playing golf one day, he paused on his backswing and said, "Why do you think we elected you, Mr. President? You were to take care of all these problems for the church!" He was just kidding, I think.)

Two other invaluable leaders of the board, J. Erskine Love, Jr. and J. Phillips Noble, deserve my great gratitude and that of the church as well. Their insightful counsel and their leadership in the life and mission of the seminary were tremendous.

The city of Decatur provided good public schools, good medical services, and an academic atmosphere with Agnes Scott College five blocks away. I am grateful for all of these elements in the time and place where we lived and worked.

Davison Philips

The Many Beginnings of Columbia Theological Seminary

A seminary, like people, nations, and other institutions, can have a defining moment which marks both the end and the beginning of distinct periods in its life. When a new president is called and inaugurated, a seminary may well experience such a defining moment which is both an ending and a beginning.

It is quite presumptuous for me to think that when I was inaugurated as president in 1976, Columbia was about to begin a new period in its history. In a sense, however, that was as true for me as it was for my predecessors in the office. In any seminary presidency, it is quite accurate to say that the past is but prelude. You can't go back and rewrite history. You can't change it. You can't even interpret it so as to make it perfect. It is not perfect, of course, but history is essential in understanding Columbia and the forces which birthed it and shaped its development. So to try to understand the years of my presidency, we must first hear a prelude, a brief overview of the seminary's history. We are fortunate to have as reference an unusually complete and yet complex record of each period in Columbia's life in the works of George T. Howe, William Childs Robinson, and Louis LaMotte.

Columbia began in the amazing commitments of the early Presbyterian church in this country. It began not in the tradition of a university setting for a school of religion or even a school of theology, but, as Robert W. Lynn has accurately described such seminaries, it began as a freestanding institution of the church. It was the product of the church. It was nurtured by the church. It was the servant of the church.

The earliest versions of that vision, however, were later carefully moderated in scope. As early as 1817, there had been a request for a plan to educate pastors for the churches of those frontier days. That year the Presbytery of Hopewell declared "its obligation and purpose to establish a theological school for the training of men for the gospel ministry." They were so determined to do the will of God that they appointed not one but two committees to get on with that exhilarating mission.

The Presbytery of South Carolina, in its forty-ninth session on April 1, 1824, launched a project under this title, *The Classical, Scientific, and Theological Seminary of the South*.² The impelling motive, according to the record, was "a desire to raise up a qualified and native ministry to supply the destitute places, to provide supervision over the extant churches; to provide an institution free from the skeptical influences which then prevailed the college of the state." That college, by the way, was to become the University of South Carolina.

Columbia Theological Seminary had many beginnings and even a few false starts. From the earliest period in her long history, an energizing conviction motivated her founders and supporters. They unquestionably believed that "Almighty God has called us ... to light up another sun which shall throw further west the light of the gospel."

In addition to the broad scope of the original concept, a real hindrance to beginning a seminary was the inability to agree on a place for it. Earlier, there had been a commitment to the Piedmont area of South Carolina as a location. Another possibility was Penfield, Georgia. Without reflecting on the qualities of the various places suggested, the ultimate decision was to begin in Lexington, Georgia.

The first professor, the impatient and exasperated Thomas Goulding, gave up on the process and began on his own in 1828, around a dining room table in the Presbyterian manse in Lexington, Georgia. (That table now sits in the president's office at Columbia as a reminder of our origins.) Describing himself as the "first Presbyterian preacher born in the state of Georgia since the foundation of the world," he taught everything he knew about Bible, theology, history, preaching, missions, as well as Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. His five students, driven to the limits of their strength by his merciless pressure during that first year, welcomed the move to Columbia, South Carolina, for their second year. Prompted by Goulding's action, the synod had finally decided on a location and determined to get on with building the seminary.

Columbia, South Carolina, was regarded as "the center of the synod, the place in which was concentrated the most wealth, literary advantages, and moral force; and at which the influence of the seminary could be brought to bear on the largest number of immortal beings." (Nearly one hundred years later, in 1927, the same reasons were offered in support of the move to Atlanta.) Objection was made to the decision because "students might be influenced in dangerous and, indeed, wicked ways by being in Columbia!"

Mr. I. K. Douglas of the committee on location eloquently re-

sponded, "The fact that infidel principles were emanating from the College of South Carolina in Columbia is a powerful argument in favor of the institution being placed there. I am not an advocate for shutting up candidates for the ministry to a convent or a cave; and if young men cannot withstand temptations in early life, I fear that there is but little hope that they will bear the burden in the heat of the day which awaits them in the afterlife."

Mr. William A. Blanding, a public-spirited citizen of Columbia, raised the money and purchased the property on which the seminary was located. Covering a block in the heart of the city bounded by Taylor, Blanding, Pickens, and Henderson Streets, it was a seven-minute walk to the College of South Carolina where students were "privileged to sharpen their mental and disputitive faculties." What eventually may have been more important for the students in the late nineteenth century was the establishment just across Blanding Street of a Presbyterian college for women, a safeguard against the cultivation of the intellectual "at the expense of the aesthetic side of life"!

In 1831 the size of the faculty was doubled, from one to two, by the election of Dr. George Howe. The selection of Howe would be critical to the life of the seminary for two reasons: first, Howe gave the seminary fifty-two years and three months of service, providing it with much-needed stability and continuity; second, he gave it the first strong tie with New England pastors and scholars. Indeed, as an 1825 graduate of Andover Theological Seminary, he was one of many from that institution who traveled as missionaries throughout the South and who taught in the institutions of the South. He began the first library at Columbia, for which four book buyers were employed in Europe to select the finest volumes produced by theologians and scholars. The choosing of Professors Goulding and Howe was the end of the beginning for the faculty and Columbia. It confirmed in the minds of the early leadership that history would "trace rays of light from institutions [Andover, Newton, and Princeton Seminaries] who are shooting them into the darkest corners of the earth."³

Columbia Theological Seminary has had only seven presidents since its founding in 1828: Thornton C. Whaling (1911-1921), John M. Wells (1921-1924), Richard T. Gillespie (1925-1930), J. McDowell Richards (1932-1971), C. Benton Kline (1971-1975), J. Davison Philips (1975-1986), and Douglas W. Oldenburg (1987-). Presidents have sought faculty, students, and functioned as "financial agents," as they were known in the nineteenth century.

Thornton C. Whaling, Columbia Theological Seminary class of 1883, was a distinguished author and scholar. He was called to

Columbia as its first president in 1911, and under his leadership the seminary experienced a period of prosperity.

Dr. John M. Wells, the second president, came to the seminary from the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, N.C. He had served as moderator of the General Assembly in 1917, and returned to the pastorate in 1924.

The third president, Dr. Richard T. Gillespie, was a 1908 graduate of Columbia and served four different pastorates before his election on November 24, 1924. He served as president from January 1, 1925, until his death on May 30, 1930. Before accepting the office of the president, he asked that the question of location, which had been a point of contention for a number of years, be resolved. The decision was made to move the seminary in 1927 to Decatur, Georgia, a small suburb which had been the first settlement in the Atlanta area. With great energy and commitment, Dr. Gillespie worked ceaselessly for the development of the seminary in its new location. He literally poured out his life into the new Columbia Seminary. Through the good times and bad, leadership for the church had been educated, and in some sense, prepared at Columbia, for ministry. The seminary's mission as well as its existence was preserved, even as it moved to a new location.

The chairman of the board at that time wrote of Dr. Gillespie, "I see him now as he stood at the beginning of his presidency, a young man with a strong, agile, and alert body, and a quick and steady step; with a clear, keen and logical mind; with a vision that was brilliant with the richest hopes; an enthusiasm that was freely fed from the exuberance of youth....I see him as he called me to the rear of the chapel just before the graduating exercises of this seminary in 1930 and threw his head on my shoulders and poured out the inner feelings of his heart to me. His task was done, and he sacrificed all for his ideals and he stood like a wounded veteran." In less than a month, he was dead. A faculty member wrote, "He had the wonderful gift, as his Master had, of seeing men better than they were. And because he saw them better than they were, they in his fellowship actually became better. In the depths of his great soul, Dr. Gillespie was a lover of his fellow man. When the very existence of Columbia was at stake, Richard T. Gillespie was raised up to be 'the Joshua of the removal.'" ⁴

Dr. Gillespie's successor, J. McDowell Richards, had been a brilliant student and a fine athlete at Davidson College. He had been appointed one of the first two Rhodes scholars from the Southeast, and had spent an eye-opening time of study and travel while in Oxford. On one occasion, he and two classmates carried on a long,

competitive struggle to see who could travel the farthest from Oxford, spend the least amount of money, and still arrive home on schedule. Once, stranded and out of money in Paris, they chose one of the group to go back to Oxford, raise the funds, return, and get them safely home! Dr. Richards had an outstanding academic record at Oxford and received its M.A. degree in 1926. A Columbia student at the time of the move to Decatur, Dr. Richards had the experience of attending the seminary at both locations. Dr. Patrick D. Miller, a lifelong friend of Dr. Richards and his colleague in the Presbyterian ministry, once said, "Mac [I would never dare call him that] was a genius. Whatever course he took in college or seminary, he could teach the next year."

After numerous efforts to secure a president for Columbia Seminary in the early 1930's had failed, Columbia's board of directors sent a delegation to Dr. Richards to tell him that he was their last hope. He had served four years in the north Georgia mountains in a group of three churches, and had just begun a pastorate at the First Presbyterian Church in Thomasville, Georgia. That church was faced with a painful choice: release him to Columbia before the first year was up or refuse! Because Columbia's call was urgent, almost desperate, the church had really little choice. One of the distinguished members of the congregation spoke for the entire church in the congregational meeting called to dissolve the relationship, "You can have him. You need him, but don't expect us to like it!"

Dr. and Mrs. Richards moved into the president's home at the seminary with little more than faith, hope, and a commitment to the hard, hard work of saving a valuable institution in a location that was becoming the center of a shifting southeastern population. This move was made in the deep conviction that Columbia Seminary was essential if the Presbyterian church was to have carefully prepared ministers of faith and competence in this area.

Dr. Richards slowly but surely led Columbia forward over the decades, enlarging the faculty, increasing the finances, gathering larger numbers of students, and most importantly, increasing its service to the church. The focus was primarily on educating ministers for the churches of the developing South. In those days, however, when great emphasis was placed upon sending missionaries overseas, Columbia had more evangelistic missionaries under appointment by the Presbyterian Church U.S. than any other Presbyterian theological institution. As the Southeast grew, many new churches were formed by new graduates. Although that practice worked well most of the time, the current thought is that there is less risk involved if new church development is done by persons who

have had extensive experience in ministry.

During the quite desperate days of the 1930's, it seemed that Columbia would follow many other church institutions in that period into some ecclesiastical grave. Indeed, the death rattle could be heard in the throats of numerous seminaries around the country. On three different occasions, merger with Union Seminary of Virginia and/or with Louisville Seminary in Kentucky was looked upon as a way out for everyone. However, with the strong support of the churches and pastors of the synods who own and control Columbia, and more importantly, with God's guidance and care, Columbia survived and ultimately flourished.

When I entered Columbia in the fall of 1940, there were less than fifty full-time students. My class had twenty-three, nineteen of whom graduated. The faculty, with the exception of some part-time instructors, consisted of Professors Cartledge, Green, Gutzke, Kerr, Robinson, and President Richards. There were two buildings, Campbell Hall, which was later enlarged, and Simons-Law. There were five faculty homes, a large and beautiful campus, and a very fine location in metropolitan Atlanta. Atlanta, even then, was a center for transportation and enjoyed considerable economic influence throughout the Southeast.

On October 14, 1940, as retiring moderator of Atlanta Presbytery, Dr. Richards preached a widely published sermon called *Brothers in Black*. This was probably done in response to remarks by Governor Eugene Talmadge. In the sermon Dr. Richards called for justice between white and black people. He called especially for a deep bond of unity of faith within the church for "in Christ all are one." Later, in 1962, Dr. Richards gave outstanding leadership to Atlanta as a coauthor of *A Minister's Manifesto*, which called for the preservation of public schools in the face of threats from the state to close them rather than desegregate. Eighty-seven ministers joined Dr. Richards in signing the manifesto, including two Columbia presidents who succeeded him, Ben Kline, and myself.

He was like a father in the faith to me and to many of his students. He cared deeply for each of us and even at times leaned over backwards to give us the benefit of a doubt. Even though he did not always give the devil his due, he could be very direct and critical. I don't believe, moreover, that he ever heard of the finer points of nonjudgemental pastoral counseling with which we are familiar. If he did, he was not overly enthusiastic about them.

Dr. Richards moved in his presidency from making most decisions himself to consulting with the faculty and the board on appointments and other major decisions in the life of the institution.

When they were young seminary professors, Wade P. Huie, Jr., Shirley C. Guthrie, and Charles B. Cousar once approached Dr. Richards in the formal setting of his office with a proposal that faculty participate more fully in the appointment of new professors. After listening to their presentation with some care, he turned, as he often did while he was thinking, and looked toward the window of the president's office. As he also often did, he took out a ring of keys and began to push them around the circle. They noticed the back of his neck was getting a little red, which was a sure sign of some impatience. Finally, he said, "I don't see anything wrong with the method we have employed when I appointed faculty. Each of you arrived at Columbia Seminary through that process, didn't you?" To the credit of all concerned, that did not end the conversation and a much more equitable and effective system was initiated which ultimately became the norm for Columbia.

President Richards' leadership and service gave new meaning to the experience of all the presidents who followed him and will follow him. In the scriptural phrase, "Others have labored and we have entered into their labors."

Dr. C. Benton Kline, the fifth president of Columbia, has had a long and useful career as a distinguished teacher of theology and philosophy, and as dean of the faculties at both Agnes Scott College and Columbia Theological Seminary. A deeply committed Presbyterian minister, he has exceptional abilities as a teacher, an administrator, and as a leader in the life of the church's governing bodies. He is widely regarded in academia for his work in accreditation visits and in consultation on major educational innovations. He was active in such ministries of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta as Campus Christian Life and the Committee on Ministry.

Although it is usually difficult and quite complicated to serve after a long-term predecessor, President Kline made a lasting impact on Columbia in his tenure of four years. While at Agnes Scott College he had been a visiting professor of theology at Columbia for several years, so he already knew the seminary well when he joined the faculty in 1969. He had extensive experience not only as an academician but also as a Presbyterian minister, preaching, teaching, and serving in local churches and governing bodies. As chairman of the board at the time he was called to be president, I participated in the conference which presented the call to him. Dr. Kline impressed us all with a response reflecting his conviction that the call was a valid and divinely led invitation to very significant service for the church.

Four years later on a lovely spring evening in April 1975, I was called out of a meeting at Decatur Presbyterian Church by the

chairman of the seminary's board of directors, J. Erskine Love, Jr. I learned that President Kline had asked the board of directors to relieve him of the presidency, grant him a sabbatical leave in the fall, and return him to full-time teaching as professor of theology. He explained his reasons: "I believe that my own talents and gifts direct me to teaching and educational leadership. Increasingly, I find that the limitations of my strength and interest work against what a president should be doing. I have been a teacher for twenty-five years and think that is what I want to do with the rest of my life."

Regretfully, the board accepted his resignation. In the fall of that year, he developed some heart problems which ultimately led to successful heart bypass surgery. Ten years later, his strength and vigor were renewed by the same procedure. He has continued to serve the seminary as professor of theology, and the church in the Council on Theology and Worship and various special ad interim committees. He also continues to serve through the Association of Theological Schools, particularly in academic matters and accreditation visits.

Of lasting impact from President Kline's administration are the achievements of a revised curriculum with an innovative blending of academic requirements. One new and helpful element involved clinical pastoral education and supervised ministry courses. A key was the careful evaluation by professors and peers at several stages in the life of a student. The advanced degree program, with emphasis on degrees in pastoral counseling and the degree of doctor of ministry, was initiated. Since that time, both have grown in numbers and in impact. The appointment and development of faculty and staff was conducted with wide-ranging searches and careful evaluation. Frederick O. Bonkovsky, T. Erskine Clarke, Catherine Gunsalus Gonzalez, Oscar Hussel, Jasper N. Keith, Jr., Cecil Moore, and Keith Nickle were appointed during his tenure. Generous sabbatic leave policies with accountability in their use were developed. A renovation of Campbell Hall was begun, and plans for new buildings were initiated.

The Calling of a President

Of course, the call with which I am most familiar came to me in November 1975. In many ways, it came as a great surprise. As the years had gone on, I had felt more and more committed to being a pastor of a church. As I approached my fifty-fifth birthday, I had begun to think of the possibility of going to a less demanding congregation than that of a large church in metropolitan Atlanta. I

doubt if there is such, but at least I could dream about it!

Any valid call to ministry, and this is surely true in my case, is based on a sequence of calls. There was a call to faith which emerged in the context of a family of faith in my home. In the Presbyterian tradition, we had family prayers and daily Bible reading as I grew up. We were at worship every time the doors opened at the churches in Nachitoches, Louisiana, and Tallahassee, Florida. At age nine, just before a move to Florida, I went through a typical communicants class led by the minister, and on a subsequent Sunday made a public profession of faith before the session and the fifty members gathered for worship. In my experience, that was a call to faith, the faith of a commitment of life to God whom we know in Jesus Christ.

The call to be a minister of Christ in the Presbyterian church came specifically in the Senior High Conference of Florida Presbytery the summer after graduation from high school. A retired minister preached on the theme: "Have You Ever Considered the Call of Christ to be a Minister!" I did consider it as a result of that sermon, and it seemed to be a call of God.

My plans for a prelaw course at the University of Florida were abandoned on the advice of my pastor, the Reverend E. N. Caldwell. "Go," he said, "to a Presbyterian college. Take Greek, Bible, history, philosophy, and English, and you'll be better prepared for seminary."

In the weeks following high school graduation, my family and I took a trip to Washington, D.C. Coming home, we planned to stop at Hampden-Sydney, Davidson, and Presbyterian Colleges. However, on a beautiful June afternoon, Hampden-Sydney College sold itself, and I began registration that very day. Both the dean and the president spent several hours with me and even led a tour of the campus.

Of course, little of this is the pattern today for seminary students since, in many cases, the call to faith and to ministry comes after college or university. Then, twelve of the sixty-seven graduates in my college class went on to seminary!

Having been exposed at Hampden-Sydney to the Student Volunteer Movement urging persons to consider foreign missions service, I looked toward ultimately serving in China where one-fourth of the world's population lived. After World War II, about the time I finally finished my doctoral dissertation, that great nation closed its life to missionaries from overseas. Thus, until the call came from Columbia in November 1975, I remained committed to the parish ministry in our church. I am very grateful for the privilege of serving as a minister of Christ in that setting.

In the spring of 1975, a presidential search committee was appointed at the meeting of the board of directors: J. Phillips Noble, chairman, Professor Shirley C. Guthrie, Board Chairman J. Erskine Love, Jr., the Reverend James B. Johnson, Jr., Mr. Lyman Mobley (student), Mr. Thomas E. Rast, President Marc Weersing (Presbyterian College), Ms. Emily Wood, the Reverend Frederick Z. Woodward, and the Reverend S. D. McCammon, Jr. (Mr. McCammon later transferred out of the Synod of Florida to Virginia and became ineligible for service.) They began their work in July and moved rapidly in their process.

The committee appropriately approved a process of openness to the church at large and to the seminary community for suggestions about both the position and the nominee. At the committee's request, I made some recommendations to them, and you can be sure that my name was not on the list. Significant papers were received from the faculty, student body, the alumni/ae, and the church at large. In other words, they cast the net widely. They also appropriately worked in a strict and confidential way. Confidentiality was preserved because I was one of a large group that knew nothing of what was going on. The invitation to a meeting with the presidential nominating committee at the Atlanta airport on October 30, 1975, was, therefore, unexpected.

My recollection of the interview was that my part of it was not a very good one. The method of discussion was appropriate since it dealt with such substantive issues as the nature of theological education, the challenges facing Columbia Theological Seminary, and primarily, the expectations of the president. However, I couldn't say very clearly what I would do if elected, what associates would be appointed, and what changes would be made. Frankly, I just didn't know. I had never thought much about them. One of my best friends on the committee told me later that I was right in thinking it was a pretty poor interview, but that "they had decided to call me anyway." You see, three out of their top five candidates withdrew from consideration!

Three days before the November 3-4, 1975, board meeting, Phil Noble called and we had a long visit. The committee wanted very much to make a nomination at the upcoming board meeting. It seemed to me, though, that the decision was so major for Kay and me, and indeed for the seminary and Decatur Presbyterian Church, that it should not be made with a snap judgement. Still uncertain, on the day before the board met I said, "go ahead and call me but give me the freedom to refuse if I wished to do so after further thought and

reflection." This they did, and I ultimately accepted and never looked back.

For several reasons, the decision seemed to be a call of God. The heart of the matter may have been expressed by Kay, "Where else would a fifty-five-year-old Presbyterian minister have an opportunity to do such unique and important work as that of a president of a seminary?" As I do in most things, I agreed with her.

The invitation created a tremendous increase in my prayers for guidance. The decision was influenced by these factors: it was important work for the church; I knew the situation fairly well; there appeared to be some confidence in the church that my experience and gifts could be helpful in leading the seminary as president; and the search committee had certainly given a great deal of thought to the nomination after very broad consultation. Most importantly, the board had issued the call. Doesn't it always come down to an inner conviction that a true call is an offer which cannot be refused? Sometimes, the fact that one seems needed is a large part of it.

So for better or for worse, these are the circumstances and the inner convictions which made me feel that it was an authentic call. It was, indeed, the call of God through people, events, and needs. Years later, I have no doubt that the call was authentic, and I am grateful to those who opened the doors of opportunity through it.

The November 1975 meeting of the board of directors at Columbia Seminary initiated a new beginning for Kay and me as well as for the faculty, students, and constituency of Columbia.

This was also a new beginning for Decatur Presbyterian Church. The decision was bittersweet since it meant leaving a much-loved community of faith. I wrote to the congregation on November 18:

I know of no greater privilege than to serve as your pastor. Thus, it is extremely difficult to tell you of my affirmative response to the call of Columbia Theological Seminary to become president there on January 1, 1976.

Throughout the twenty-one years here, I have known nothing but a deep commitment to the magnificent opportunities for ministry in Decatur Presbyterian Church. On a number of occasions, I have felt led by God's guidance to decline other invitations to service. In this instance, I have sought and, I believe, received guidance that this is not only the call of the church and the seminary, but, indeed, of the Lord, whose I am and whom I serve.

Perhaps it will help to review the sequence of events during the past three weeks which have led to this conviction.

On Thursday, October 30, the search committee representing the board, faculty, and students of the seminary asked me to meet for an extensive discussion of Columbia's situation. Following this, they reported their unanimous decision to recommend me to the full board on November 3 and 4, for election as the next president. Since there was insufficient opportunity to consider so significant a matter, I asked for several days time for prayerful consideration.

These have been rather intense hours of continuing a full program here and at the same time experiencing the sometimes lonely and sometimes challenging moments of decision making. The session has prayed with me for God's guidance through these days. In the end, Kay and I have felt that this is a valid call of God to a challenging and significant work affecting the whole church and hundreds of students during the next decade.

After twenty-one years of serving Christ and the community as pastor of Decatur Presbyterian Church, the Presbytery of Atlanta approved the dissolution of the relationships as requested by the congregation and me, and also approved the call of the seminary to serve as president.

J. Erskine Love, Jr., on behalf of the board of directors, presented me with a gracious and generous introduction to the seminary community in a special convocation. I had about an hour to prepare a statement for them, and I am still not sure of all the things I said. Quite naturally, I expressed some anxiety about the tremendous responsibilities a president at Columbia would have for the immediate future. Of course, the Columbia community was anxious as well. I do remember telling them that I could only be myself and no one else. That would be good news for some and bad news for others, particularly those who were hoping for more! However, in reliance upon the grace and guidance of God, our anxieties would eventually give way to confidence and great expectations for the future.

The question before the seminary at that moment was, "How shall we begin?" From my perspective, we began with gratitude for Columbia's history and tradition which had brought us to that moment. We were grateful for the present opportunities and the support of the synods in the states of South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, and Kentucky. We were grateful for a clear sense of mission as a Presbyterian theological seminary. The buildings, the location, the faculty, staff, and board,

and the prayers of the church at large were all causes for genuine gratitude.

The problems and challenges before us were varied but real. To ignore them was to risk not only failure but a real disaster for us and the church. We began, then, with a prayer for the guidance of God in the important decisions before the seminary and in the lives of all concerned in its work. The God we served was the God of hope, and we would move on with hope.

I wrote the seminary community, faculty, staff, and students the day after my election: "The opportunity to meet with you in convocation for the announcement of my election as your president was important and meaningful to me. As we think and pray together, I look forward to sharing vision, hope, and strength with you as God guides and nourishes that process. You can understand that the past few weeks have been unique times of struggle and decision for Kay and me. God's promise, however, is that with mission there is peace and strength. 'As the days are, so our strength will be.' Let us help each other in the hope that we can be more together than we could ever be apart." I said to them in a postscript, "When you stood up in chapel on Thursday morning following Mr. Love's announcement, you frightened me! I thought you might be walking out!"

By January 1976 we had begun together — the board of directors, the faculty and staff, the students, and the entire constituency in the Presbyterian church. The first faculty meeting I attended during my first week at Columbia brought a rather complex decision. A member of Decatur Presbyterian Church, who for years had been quite active and had served as scoutmaster for the Boy Scouts of America troop which met at our church, died. The associate pastor called to see if I would have the funeral. It was set near the time of the faculty meeting which was for me a "command performance." In addition, our church polity does not allow a former pastor to continue to do pastoral duties without the invitation of the session and the pastor. I was forced to decline. It was very difficult for the family to understand that. It was a decision, however, which set a pattern for years to come.

The Nature of the Office

The *nature* of the office and the *length* of a president's term should be added to a cluster of issues in theological education which the church needs to address. The nature of a call to ministry in some specific place, with a distinctive mission, is of the utmost significance

both in the church and with seminary presidents today. There is a growing concern throughout academia about the role of seminary presidents and the forces at work which now make their tenures very short. Since the usual tenure is four to seven years, it is all the more amazing that J. McDowell Richards served *thirty-nine years* as Columbia's fourth president. Will anyone ever duplicate or surpass such a period of leadership? (The only possibility might take place in some independent seminary started by an independent minister who owns and controls everything there throughout his/her entire lifetime.)

The first task of most search committees who will nominate a seminary president is to determine the nature of the office and the abilities and commitments of the person needed. Columbia's presidents were all quite different, especially in the style of leadership they brought to the seminary. However, each provided something needed at Columbia in the years of his service. Each served a specific institution in a specific place in varying historical contexts.

The 1975 committee agreed that the president should have the following qualities:

1. The president should be someone with competence as an administrator.
2. The president should be a respected and spiritual leader for the constituency.
3. The president should have the ability to function in academic circles.
4. The president should be a team builder having ability to recognize competence.
5. The president should have broad pastoral experience, but not necessarily lengthy.
6. The president should be known in the denomination.
7. The president should have competence for denominational leadership.
8. The president should have a capacity for fund raising.

I have the distinct feeling that they were forced to settle for less than complete fulfillment of these qualities in their choice of a president! In any event, all of the presidents have been qualified by education, experience in the Presbyterian church, and a deep commitment to the mission of the theological seminary in a denominational setting. Given the pressures externally and internally, however, requiring creative leadership on the part of the president, there must be some limits on expectation.

A result of the nature and duties of the presidency and pressures involved has been frequent turnover in the office. During the years

1976 through 1987, each of the eleven Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.) theological institutions called a new president and did so twice in some instances. With one exception, all presidents were ordained Presbyterian ministers. Austin, Louisville, Dubuque, McCormick, and the Presbyterian School of Christian Education chose experienced and well-known educators; Princeton, Union (Virginia), Columbia, and San Francisco, pastors of churches. Most had not only the degrees required for ordination but also earned doctorates.

I am not alone in my conviction that there are no conclusive ways to describe the functions of presidents or to prepare by education or experience for the position. What so complicates this whole process is that presidents are expected not only to devote intensive time to participation in the life of the institution as administrator, teacher, and leader, but in some ways, also as pastor. Decision-making processes, which call for extensive participation by various groups, is time-consuming and is effective only when wisely utilized. A president is expected to participate in the governing bodies which own and control the seminary. The Council on Theological Education at the General Assembly level and the councils of the synods and the presbyteries by charter have a partnership with seminaries such as Columbia. For me, numerous opportunities to preach, teach, and lead seminars throughout the United States and overseas were a great privilege. In addition, I enjoyed teaching New Testament courses and continuing education seminars. They demanded much preparation, however, and the time needed for that was most difficult to secure in a president's schedule. The development of faculty, consultation with students, and participation in decisions in many areas can drain a president's strength quickly.

In reflecting on all of these things, I am continually impressed by the gifts and the leadership of the presidents of our theological schools. Out of commitment to both Christ and the church, they devote enormous time and energy to this important mission.

In the collegial style of management today, neither the president nor the other constituent groups involved can effectively work together without mutual respect and support. A seminary is a special kind of community of scholarship, service, and life which reflects the work of Christ. No management style will succeed if it is strictly business oriented.

Summary

Through ninety-eight years in Columbia and forty-eight years in Decatur, there were numerous other beginnings and endings for this

seminary. The post-Civil War era in the midst of a desolate environment was one beginning; another came after a brief period of suspension in the 1880's for the usual reasons of few students and no money. At the time of the move to Georgia, it was the conviction of some that the institution was finally coming to an end of its service and that without the move, it would soon be buried in an ecclesiastical grave. As Columbia, South Carolina, was at the time of the seminary's founding, so Atlanta, Georgia, was the center of the Southeast at the time of the move. The Presbyterians of Mississippi and Alabama, particularly along with Florida, had long petitioned for a site much closer to them. Under these pressures, a very wise decision was made by the board of directors.

Through the influence of elders and pastors, including John Bulow Campbell, and the pastors of Decatur, First (Atlanta), and Central (Atlanta) Presbyterian Churches, the resources were developed for the move. Two buildings were erected, the library was moved on a truck by students, and classes were initiated on what had been farmland. One of the students involved in moving the library to Decatur evidently kept the large brass key to the library door in Columbia. He sent it to me through his son, and it is now on display at the seminary as a valued artifact.

Decatur has proven to be an excellent choice. The building of a suitable plant in a good location, with a strong faculty and student body, was the great vision of those who led the move to Decatur and was an important part of the prelude to my presidency.

The Education of a President

Those swiftly moving months following the November 1975 board meeting seemed at times to be an ever-rolling stream of conferences, meetings, appointments, research, travel, preaching, and a general "getting-to-know-each-other" period. Hundreds of letters from all kinds of people provided great sustenance for me during this challenging time.

President Kline, Dean Cousar, and a number of other faculty in unusually supportive ways said, "welcome" and "we will help!" Professor James S. Stewart, my Ph.D. supervisor and New Testament professor at New College, Edinburgh, wrote, "Warmest congratulations on your call to the presidency of Columbia Theological Seminary. May you have great happiness in this important academic position and much blessing for many fruitful years." Richard T. Gillespie, III, son of a former president, sent this message: "Mary and I are delighted to hear that you have accepted a call to become president of C.T.S. It is needless to tell you of our interest in and concern for the institution. We have a son who is a first level student there." Their son, Richard T. Gillespie, IV, and daughter, Mary Gillespie Amos, graduated from Columbia during my presidency.

The varied responses can be illustrated by these: from an alumnus in Taiwan, Don McCall, "It is good news, indeed, that you will assume the presidency of Columbia Seminary on January 1. We will pray for you and look forward to keeping in touch with you in the years ahead." A faculty member commented, "I hope your caulk is better than mine for this sinking ship!" Neely McCarter, dean of Union Seminary in Virginia and an alumnus of Columbia, advised: "Don't work yourself to death like Ben Kline and Fred Stair do." (Note: Both are alive and working still!) None of these letters and calls, and the file is five inches wide with them, meant more than those from a great number of lay people throughout the church and the city of Atlanta. These sincere good wishes and assurances of prayerful support minimized the sense of loneliness we all feel in new situations. They sustained me both in those early days and to the end of my presidency.

For me, the end of the beginning came with the inauguration service on November 8, 1976, at Peachtree Presbyterian, one of the

seminary's most supportive churches. Nearly a year had passed since the board elected me, an intensive year of moving in on January 1, 1976, and then moving on. The service was a blend of academic tradition and worship. Official delegates came from old and new, weak and strong, diverse and uniform educational institutions. Every synod and presbytery in the supporting synods sent a representative. Faculty, students, and staff participated. Of major significance was the leadership of the board of directors in the planning and in the implementation of one of the most important moments of my life and in the life of Columbia. J. Erskine Love, Jr. administered the vow of inauguration in which I pledged my service and leadership to this instrument of God's mission to the world. I never think of him without giving thanks for the quality of his life and friendship.

A most memorable moment in the service came in the inaugural prayer offered by J. Phillips Noble. I kept a framed copy in my office throughout my tenure as a constant reminder of the grace of God.

Eternal Father,

Lord of Kings and all who exercise authority,
Maker of priests,
Caller of prophets,
Saviour of mankind,

We worship you here and now.

Risen and ever-living Christ,

Head and Cornerstone of your Church,
Author and Finisher of our faith,
Victor over sin and death,

We worship you here and now.

Divine Holy Spirit,

Life of God among us,
Searcher of human minds and hearts,
Revealer of truth and error,

We worship you here and now.

Great Triune God, wonderful beyond our comprehension,

Touch us all this hour and this moment.

Especially touch thy servant chosen to lead this
school of prophets, priests, and servants.

Make him a prophet with courage to speak
the truth when it is hard.

Make him a priest among priests who reverently
ministers thy grace.

Make him a servant who becomes leader indeed,
by humble serving.

Living God, be behind and before and beside him in the day and in the night, in the marching of the years and the changing of the times,

To make him strong, without being dictatorial;

To make him humble, without being weak;

To make him wise, without being arrogant;

To make him effective, without being affected;

To make him determined, without being
stubborn;

To make him hopeful, without being naive;

To make him tolerant, without being ambivalent.

Through all the days of his presidency,

May your favor rest upon him.

May he be held secure by your love that will not let
him go.

May he lead clearly and creatively with courage
born of a lively faith.

May his commitment to you, rooted in the heri-
tage of the past, bring forth results appro-
priate to this day and every new day.

We pray in the name of Jesus, who gives shape to the ministry and life of us all. Amen.

May God be praised for the way it was answered in the years of my presidency. May I be forgiven if it was not.

Among the distinguished speakers and participants at the inauguration were:

Dr. W. Frank Harrington, pastor, Peachtree Presbyterian Church,
board of directors, Columbia Seminary

Miss Alice A. Johnson, Columbia Seminary senior

Mr. James H. Foil, Jr., Columbia Seminary senior, student
coordinating council president

J. Erskine Love, Jr., chairman of the board, Columbia Seminary

Dr. J. McDowell Richards, former president, Columbia Seminary

Dr. C. Benton Kline, Jr., former president, Columbia Seminary

Dr. J. Phillips Noble, search committee chairperson, board of
directors, Columbia Seminary

Dr. James E. Andrews, stated clerk, The General Assembly,
The Presbyterian Church in the United States

Dr. Fred R. Stair, president, Union Theological Seminary,
Richmond, Virginia

Dr. Grant S. Shockley, president, Interdenominational
Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia

Dr. Charles B. Cousar, dean of academic affairs, Columbia Seminary

Dr. William A. Adams, alumni/ae association president, Columbia Seminary

Dr. Hubert V. Taylor, senior faculty member, Columbia Seminary

Nine hundred Presbyterians attended, many of whom were friends and colleagues from other days. In addition to Peachtree members, First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, First Presbyterian Church of Thomasville, Georgia, and Decatur Presbyterian Church encouraged me greatly through the presence of many lifelong friends. Ecumenical representatives were important in their participation.

I am still amazed that so many persons stayed after the long program for the reception hosted by Dr. and Mrs. Harrington and Peachtree Presbyterian Church. By the end of the day, I was a most warmly recognized and welcomed president, and to say the least, the beginning was over!

In a major article dated December 1976, the *Presbyterian Survey* described the inauguration:

For the sixth time in 149 years, Columbia Theological Seminary inaugurated a president, Dr. J. Davison Philips, in colorful ceremonies at Peachtree Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, Georgia. Philips succeeds Dr. C. Benton Kline who had been president of the seminary since 1971 and who resigned to return to teaching. Philips was pastor of Decatur Presbyterian Church before he was elected to this position. "Three Tables," the new president's inaugural address, focused on the mission of preparing people for the ministry. The first table described the seminary's heritage from its founding in Lexington, Georgia, in a study session around a table in the Presbyterian church manse under the tutelage of Dr. Thomas Goulding. The second table, a study table, symbolized today's educational task for the seminary. The third table, Holy Communion, illustrated the church's strength and mission in Jesus Christ.

The Presbytery of Greater Atlanta emphasized the occasion by holding an adjourned meeting at the time of the inauguration. Adding to the occasion was the colorful procession of 135 representatives of synods and presbyteries in the three synods which support the seminary, the faculty, the board of directors, and those of numerous other colleges and seminaries.

President Fred R. Stair wrote, "Your inauguration was auspicious, impressive....Now that you have settled down from your inaugural 'high,' and it was good to hear your inaugural address which I deeply appreciate...do you still agree we could have a SPATS meeting at Columbia Seminary February 26-27?" SPATS, Southern Presbyterian Association of Theological Schools, brought five seminary presidents together to plan and implement joint efforts for the good of the church's mission in theological education. It was one of hundreds of meetings which I attended in the eleven years to follow. (In heaven I hope they do not sing that gospel hymn, "Til' We Meet Again"!)

We were at the end of the beginning.

Learning to be President

While the board of directors presented the call to be Columbia's president with warmth and confidence-inducing commitment to share in the great mission of the seminary, they were quite realistic in urging, and, indeed, requiring a period of indoctrination. They recommended that the first two months of 1976 be used for visits to other institutions, and consultations with other presidents, theological education councils and associations. This I embraced with all possible enthusiasm, for while the basics of faith and mission involve both, there is a broad gap between a pastorate in a church and a presidency in a seminary.

My first week at Columbia was set aside in my mind as a time of planning and scheduling consultations. I would, of course, preside over my first faculty meeting during that week and start intensive and extensive consultation with the administrative staff. There was a very natural anxiety on everyone's part as we began this new chapter in our lives and our ministries. This week was an instant learning experience.

Don't think I am forgetting the faculty and students, either. Perish the thought! They came individually and collectively with information, advice, and requests. One student group complained of the flaws in the clinical experiences where the supervisors were "ruthless" in their criticism of the pastoral care given in hospitals or in local congregations. Others indicated it was the best part of their education.

Many of the faculty consultations were either "getting acquainted" sessions or requests for sabbatical leave. Columbia had and has a very generous leave program which provides full salary and benefits for one year in seven. As an option, a quarter, now a semester, was

granted after three years. When combined with the summer, that gave an extended opportunity for study here or abroad and for research and writing. A clear purpose for the program of study and research was developed under the supervision of the faculty and dean, and recommended to the board of directors for approval. Sabbaticals made significant contributions to professors' research, effectiveness in teaching, and to the educational mission of the seminary.

The fifteen secretaries on the staff also asked for a meeting. This is remembered as a "getting-to-know-you" time, but there were discussions about pay, benefits, vacation and sick leave, and working conditions. A number of them asked for IBM electric typewriters to replace the Royal electrics, but that was far from unanimous! That problem is now solved with computer word processors throughout the administration and faculty offices.

One of the most enjoyable interviews was with the kitchen staff. Claude Clopton, the cook, had served during the Richards and Kline administrations with great efficiency and good humor. Many graduates had done scholarship work in the serving line under Claude's supervision, and he was the first person they went to see when back on campus. Claude was that rare person who went the third and fourth mile to do his job. Once, as Atlanta was paralyzed in an ice storm, Claude drove through hazardous streets in the early hours of the morning to get to the seminary to cook breakfast. Approximately a mile from the Columbia campus, his car skidded into a ditch near Agnes Scott College. Slipping and sometimes falling, he walked the rest of the way, and it was breakfast as usual at 7:30 A.M. A longtime friend to me and other presidents, Claude got his wish to work until he died. A faithful member of Holsey Temple C.M.E. Church, he had a wonderful funeral service there and a memorial service in the seminary chapel on January 28, 1991, during the week of the Columbia Forum. Professor Charles B. Cousar represented Columbia and spoke at both.

Of invaluable assistance to me at that point, also, were two important administrators at Columbia. Treasurer F. Sidney Anderson carefully briefed me on budgets and finances, and with Eugene Tennis, the director of development, informed me of potential sources of gifts and grants for the mission of Columbia. Sidney, an alumnus, a pastor, and a former dean of students, devoted long hours to managing the office of treasurer, the endowment, and the faculty and campus plant budgets.

The Reverend Cecil Moore, also a graduate of Columbia Seminary, has spent a major part of his life and ministry as superintendent

of buildings and grounds. He is that rare minister who can do many things in connection with buildings and grounds and who was a most valuable administrator in the whole mission of the seminary. He came back to the campus from a pastorate in Mississippi out of a real interest and commitment to Columbia. One evidence of Cecil Moore's contribution can be found in the appreciation of faculty for him, and particularly for his care of faculty housing. When professors purchased homes off campus to build up equity and get income tax reductions in benefits, they always wanted to "rent" Cecil!

Will Ormond, a highly valued professor of biblical exposition and my classmate at Columbia, once spoke in a chapel sermon of his wonder at Cecil's abilities. He documented it by describing a frustrating moment when he could not start his lawnmower. He pulled and pulled and to hear him tell it, sweat great drops of perspiration to no avail. After the fifteenth failure to get it running, he saw his neighbor Cecil come out of his house and walk slowly across the lawn. Will declared that the mower started immediately after Cecil laid his hand on it!

Charles B. Cousar agreed to serve as dean of faculty even though he was due a year's sabbatical at the time of my election. What a source of wisdom and information he was to me for the first three years of my presidency! Dean Cousar is an excellent example of a devoted faculty member who, with his wife, Betty, and their three sons, shared in the life of the seminary community. His influence on students was one of quality in New Testament studies, in worship, and even in sports and parties! His sabbatical leaves produced good results in his scholarship through study in Germany and Cambridge, England, as well as an earlier Ph.D. with A. M. Hunter in Aberdeen, Scotland. His whole ministry has been at Columbia.

Oscar Hussel was chosen from a number of candidates as the next dean and vice president for academic affairs. A professor of Christian education, he had had wide experience in a church in Birmingham, Alabama, and on the Board of Christian Education of the United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at the time of important curriculum developments. A careful planner and experienced leader in the church, he worked well with the faculty and staff, and with me, during my remaining eight years.

Dr. T. Erskine Clarke, dean of students, developed clear policies for financial aid, work scholarships, students' life in worship and recreation and student disciplinary policies. When he was appointed professor of American religious history, alumni Peter Carruthers and Philip R. Gehman continued the work of the office with devotion and diligence.

Professor of theology, Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr., was the faculty representative on the search committee charged with nominating the president. A faculty member since 1957, he was, and is, held in high regard by colleagues and students. Often preaching and teaching in churches and conferences, Dr. Guthrie knew our constituency well, and was a valuable source of information and insight. His book, *Christian Doctrine*, originally a part of the Covenant Life Curriculum, has been one of the most influential books in the life of Presbyterian congregations. It continues to be studied in churches throughout the denomination, and used as a textbook in seminaries in this country and abroad.

Although the needs of Columbia prevented my using the two months offered for research and "learning how to be president," I did have significant interviews with the presidents of ten theological schools. The first conference was with Dean James T. Laney of Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Later president of Emory University and now Ambassador to South Korea, he had served the Methodist church as a missionary in Korea, and was an ethics scholar. We are still good friends, and I am much indebted to him. Candler School of Theology was well financed through a plan which began in the North Georgia Conference of the Methodist church and is in place in Presbyterian and Lutheran churches. Each local congregation voluntarily committed two percent of its current expense budget to Candler. That remarkable concept of binding the church and the institution together in a common venture has spread throughout the United States. It has made Candler a well-financed institution and bound it to the Methodist church.

The second conference was arranged through Al Jepson, a former campus minister at Georgia Tech, a member of Atlanta Presbytery, and on the staff of Fuller Theological Seminary. President David Hubbard of Fuller, who was later to be president of the Association of Theological Schools, was in Atlanta for an A.T.S. committee meeting. We met in the president's office which was still in the process of transition. The famous circular oak table used by Ben Kline was in the center of the room. (Ben used it for six stacks of papers dealing with six different areas of responsibility. He would move his chair to the stack to be dealt with that day rather than moving the papers. Ingenious and efficient!)

The conversation with President Hubbard dealt with basics and especially relations with constituencies and finances. Fuller has grown in its curriculum and has continually sought, through faculty and students, acceptance by the Presbyterian church. The door, once closed to Fuller graduates, has slowly opened through the efforts of

scholars like President Hubbard and Jack Rogers, professor of theology. (After service in the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit of the General Assembly, Professor Rogers is now a faculty member of San Francisco Theological Seminary.) I remember Dr. Hubbard's fervent recommendation that any person making proposals for new programs such as the school of world mission and the pastoral counseling program would be required to raise the money involved.

President Fred Rogers Stair of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, in his usual thoughtful and gracious way, promptly welcomed Kay and me to a three-day, carefully planned consultation at Union. The invitation reflected his attitude that the two theological institutions were partners, not competitors, in the great mission assigned to us by the church. He gave us the use of a guest room, an office and phone, a car, and a list of appointments with deans, administrators, and students.

Although he revealed a very positive view of the president's role, he also kept it in perspective with humor and realism. For example, he suggested that the academic world of the campus could "take you over like kudzu vines on a Georgia farm. You'll be talking of meetings and organizations in letters, not words — ATS, SPATS, ATA, VC, GAC, etc., etc. That helps you sound like a president!" he said. Just kidding, I hoped.

Seminaries all have distinctive patterns of life and work. I am reminded of the terra-cotta figures in Xian, China, where hundreds of soldiers with horses and chariots were buried by a young emperor so that they would serve him in life after death. The artist was trying to duplicate their features in life, by making each figure distinctive. The church's institutions, even with a common mission, also have distinct features. Although all relate in significant ways to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), only Columbia has precise language which gives authority to "own and control" to the synods. T. Hartley Hall, IV, successor to Dr. Stair as president of Union, called them "a patchwork quilt" of relationships in his carefully researched study of charters of all Presbyterian seminaries involved in the reunion of Presbyterians.

Location, in itself, will provide distinctiveness. History, dealing with beginnings and evolving patterns of government, will also provide complexity. Only the mission truly unites. The education and continuing nurture of ministers, the scholarly research and other resources for the church, and the programs on and off campus for lay leaders are reflected in various ways in the life of seminaries.

Union Seminary, and this visit only confirmed my previous impressions, was and is a place where the basics are given attention.

Commitments to teaching and learning of a high quality were apparent. Securing and managing the gifts of the church to meet the financial needs of the institution was a priority for all. The students, faculty, staff, buildings, and programs on and off campus were also a responsibility that had been taken seriously at Union.

One impression was not entirely unexpected. Professors and administrators at Union evidenced a genuine interest in students before, and *after* graduation. One professor who pastors his former students and minister friends is John H. Leith, emeritus professor of theology. As classmates at Columbia Seminary, and friends since that time, I have valued his continued relationships with former students as well as his books on theology, the creeds, the Reformed tradition, polity, and on the life and work of the church.

The other seminaries of the former P.C.U.S. were visited in fairly rapid succession. The Presbyterian School of Christian Education, established by the General Assembly to educate Christian educators for the church, is also located in Richmond, so we visited P.S.C.E. while at Union. The issue of ordination for educators remains important to the church and to that school. The proposals calling for moving the basic degree from a two-year to a three-year degree with the educational requirements for ordination fully met have been approved by the General Assembly.

In a limited way, all Presbyterian seminaries are now providing ministers who have significant responsibility in Christian education in local churches. In fact, the great majority of our churches are served by one minister who is responsible for the education of youth, adults, and children, as he or she is responsible for everything. In the realities of congregational and parish life, the luxury of picking and choosing among these areas is just that, a luxury. It would seem that many seminary students wish to pick and choose what they will do in the parish setting. It may be preaching or pastoral care, but program, administration, fund raising, and civic duties are often excluded. It just won't work that way! This means every seminary must provide education in the teaching and learning programs of the church which we have called "Christian education." The Presbyterian School of Christian Education, however, is the only institution of the Presbyterian church focusing on that in a comprehensive and intensive way, with graduate work for advanced studies. This makes it all the more valuable to the church.

The preparation sequence in those early days in the president's office took me to the Northeast for consultations at Union Seminary in New York, New York Theological Seminary, and Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey. The three are quite different but

offer many insights to the rest of us. Union, New York, was under the leadership of President Donald K. Shriver. A P.C.U.S. minister, a campus pastor, and professor at Candler School of Theology, he brought a blend of academic prowess and administrative skills to Union. One of his first aims was to build a stronger relationship between his institution and the church. "How can we serve each other?" he asked. In its life in pre-World War II and in the postwar period, Union had world-renowned professors such as Reinhold Niebuhr who impacted the theological world from the standpoint of his early parish ministry experiences. Union's Presbyterian connection continues through its merger with Auburn Theological Seminary. Don and Peggy Shriver were very gracious in welcoming me and spending a good deal of time analyzing issues facing the church and the world and their relation to theological education.

When Don was made president of Union, he left his Candler professorship in Christian ethics, but preserved his membership in Atlanta Presbytery. In a *New York Times* article reporting the arrival of Dr. Shriver at Union, the president of the student government was so impressed with this new president that he remarked, "I am glad that someone is now in charge of life at Union Theological Seminary!" Early on, President Shriver brought the distinguished African American preacher and professor, Dr. James Forbes, to Union to teach. When Dr. Forbes spoke at the Columbia Forum a few years later, he said to us, "I knew Don was from the South, because the day we moved into the seminary apartment, he appeared at the door to welcome us personally with a housewarming gift of a loaf of homemade bread and some cheese!"

I enjoyed a day at New York Theological Seminary. Dr. Dean McKee, who was president when it was called Biblical Seminary, taught during his latter years at Columbia. He prepared me for an impressive and innovative seminary. With the majority of students working, much part-time education went on. Asians, Blacks, and Hispanics of all theological persuasions enrolled in night classes and attended all day on Saturday. The Saturday I visited, President William Webber of Harlem parish fame was teaching two classes. He gave me, however, some valuable time in a two-hour discussion of his seminary. "Our students," he said, "are hungry for education and for theological degrees. Some are in storefront churches and others in large congregations. A substantial number of Pentecostals attend, but there are some more liberal communions represented, including some politically active students."

After worship at Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church and a visit with the pastor, David H. C. Read, I travelled to the historic

Princeton Theological Seminary. President James I. McCord arranged a guest room for me, told me where to find the key in a sign outside, and assured me I would have the room where Karl Barth once slept. Surrounded by so "great a cloud of witnesses" in such historic settings, I was surprised that I slept soundly and barely made it to breakfast before the dining hall closed. Again, a good group of teachers and administrators made time for me, and we talked of the many important issues of faculty, students, constituency, and finances.

The diversity among students at Princeton was surprising to me in its extent. A significant number of non-Presbyterians were and are enrolled in the master of divinity degree program. There were caucuses for twelve different special interest groups announcing their activities, lectures, and one or two demonstrations!

During the last fifteen to twenty years, Princeton has been able to attract a number of young and gifted professors from other Presbyterian seminaries. There are reasons for this, but based on the experience of faculty at Louisville, Union in Virginia, and Columbia, the major attraction is the opportunity to work with Ph.D. and other graduate degree students. However, this is a loss of highly valued faculty for these institutions, as I know from experience with the loss of Thomas G. Long. President McCord finally secured Professor Long's acceptance on the third try. He wrote a letter expressing regret at taking him from Columbia, but said he was needed at Princeton to "anchor our department." That didn't help too much, for we also needed him for his many gifts.

Princeton's endowment, estimated in 1993 at more than \$300 million, is an admirable example of stewardship. Under the leadership of John Templeton, investment counselor and chairman of the board of trustees from the early 1950's until just recently, the endowment has grown in value and greatly increased through gifts and bequests. I had just become president of an institution with five million dollars in endowment! But, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's endowment [or the size of thy neighbor's library]." What a hard saying!

At the invitation of President Ellis Nelson, we enjoyed a consultation with Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary which was very important to those of us at Columbia. Both schools shared the Synod of the Mid-South as a supporting synod. The states of Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky make up that synod. The first two had long shared support for both Louisville and Columbia. However, Columbia had a very large number of graduates in all four states and drew many students from them.

One complicating factor was that when the Synod of the Mid-South was formed in the early 1970's, the two institutions agreed to a division of the seminary gifts from the synod, twenty-eight percent for Columbia and seventy-two percent for Louisville. This reflected the ratio of dollars both had received before presbyteries in that geographical area were merged into the synod. In addition, Louisville was related to both Presbyterian denominations, which meant that reunion would have special impact on that divided situation.

As the British say, it "needed sorting out." Two things helped. Both presidents and both institutions worked together to make it work for the good of the church. In a capital funds campaign for \$1,500,000, President Nelson and I travelled together speaking to large and small church groups. He was fun to be with and a most insightful person. Growing up in Texas and spending years at Union Seminary in New York teaching Christian education, he was committed to the church, theologically perceptive, and an interpreter of the American religious scene.

He would speak on *What the Church Expects from Seminaries*. I would speak on *What the Seminaries Expect of the Church*. Just to relieve the monotony of sameness for both of us, one night I reversed the topics and speaking first, took his title. Without any notice of the change, he went on and gave my speech!

Working with Ellis was an invaluable experience. As a man for all seasons, he knew well theological education and also the church with all its dynamics. He told me of a defining moment in a faculty meeting with which I could resonate. In the context of that seminary's history and its present challenges, he asked those at the meeting, "Who are our constituents?" His answer: "The members of the Presbyterian church. We may have a few others, but this is the basic constituency given us and no other."

It was a double blessing from Louisville when Ellis' successor, President John Mulder, a church historian, Presbyterian leader, and gracious colleague, became a valued partner in our mission for the Presbyterian church. His present role in editing a significant series of important works on the Presbyterian church, our history, and our present dilemma is of lasting influence for us today. We need to pay attention to what this research reveals, and to what it says in speaking to our future!

Numerous opportunities are provided for new presidents and other administrators by the Association of Theological Schools. With 257 institutions in the U.S.A. and Canada in its membership, a constant flow of new leaders assumes responsibilities in a wide variety of schools.

In the first few years of my presidency, a seminar sponsored by the Lilly Endowment stands out. New presidents were invited to attend what was actually an institutional planning program and to invite their key administrators in academics, finances, and development. The fact that such a session was held off campus in the context of stimulating addresses and discussions made it work at a very important time for Columbia. Plans, both short and long range, were developed without interruptions. In the final versions developed with the board of directors and the presbyteries, they formed our institutional priorities and efforts for the late seventies.

A second seminar, sponsored by the Association of Theological Schools, was the pre-convention program on spirituality in theological education. The conference began with an address by the executive director, Dr. Jesse Zeigler, presenting the urgency of the issue of developing spirituality in the experience of seminary students. He began with a conversation he had with a stranger on an airplane during a long flight. When the man discovered that Dr. Zeigler worked with seminaries and other theological schools, he began to talk about ministers who had served in his midwestern church. His comments went like this: "The ministers I have known in my church are smart, they know theology, they are good counselors, and they administer the life of the church well. How I wish, though, they knew more about God, and how to relate God to my life at my level of existence."

Dean Krister Stendahl responded after the address with an urgent call for a vision of Christian spirituality in America. It could be developed "through contributions from experience in this area from both new and old traditions. It is essential," Professor Stendahl went on, "for students preparing for ministry." He described a faculty meeting in 1954 when he had just begun as a professor at Harvard Divinity School. He asked, "Who is responsible for the spiritual development of our students?" After a long silence, someone responded by saying, "Here in the United States, we don't do it that way. Here, all of us are responsible." Professor Stendahl continued by saying, "In Sweden, anytime you get that answer it really means no one does it!" His colleague responded, "You have touched a sensitive nerve, Dr. Stendahl."

He had, indeed. Granted, an obsessive turning inward can be little more than escape. But Protestants have only recently become concerned again about spirituality. They have been seeking to recapture nurturing ways to develop spirituality through prayer, worship, scripture, devotional reading, meditation, and above all, communion. Another forceful comment came from a dean of a

strong, African American seminary urging us to look at the contributions which the African American church was making in this area.

After these two important lectures, the presidents and deans were divided into groups of twelve (apostolic number by coincidence!) and spent several hours on questions in the area of spirituality. What is it? How can we authenticate it? Most of all, how can we, personally, and the entire seminary community, experience it? Dean Mouw at Fuller Theological Seminary presided, and Henri J.M. Nouwen was the resource person.

Father Nouwen taught for a time at Yale in the broad field of pastoral care and counseling. However, it seems to me that he got the attention of ministers in his books with his view of ministry. The "future leaders of the church," as described in *The Wounded Healer*, "must enter into the pain of persons if they are to be healed." They must be, moreover, "articulate, compassionate," and most of all, "contemplative" ministers of Christ.⁵

What are our wounds as ministers? From eight or ten different words, Professor Nouwen chose "loneliness" as best describing our experience. In this pivotal discussion in a little room at a convention center, we came under the leadership of one who seemed to understand the strengths and weaknesses of presidents and deans who were, after all, human yet committed servants of Jesus Christ. The contemplative, reflective, prayerful disciplines of our walk with God and with the people of God will ultimately nourish and bless us. Otherwise, who is "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord?" The whole conference and the small group discussions made a strong impression on me. I believe these issues will always be of enormous significance in learning to be a minister.

My consultation at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary was with President Prescott Williams, Old Testament scholar and successor to the very effective President David Stitt. It came after a meeting of the Committee on Theological Education of the P.C.U.S., the primary coordinating instrument of the five P.C.U.S. theological schools. With wit and wisdom, President Williams talked of the distinctive ministry of Austin Seminary to the great Southwest, and of the seminary's close relationship to the Synod of Red River. The Presbyterian church in the Southwest and Austin were mutually dependent on each other. In many ways, Austin's geographical setting gave it a special relationship with its governing bodies.

President David Stitt led Austin during a period of increasing financial support and a growing respect for its work. Jane Stitt, who shared this work with her husband, was a valued member of the P.C.U.S. Committee on Theological Education. They shared the

hopes and dreams of those who cared about Austin Presbyterian Seminary. I wish I could have spent more time with the faculty and students there.

With these various and helpful visits, the briefing and consulting ended, and the work began.

Students

The life of a theological seminary begins and ends, ultimately, with students. In 1828 five students began an informal program of tutoring with Dr. Thomas Goulding. The first organized class at Columbia was enrolled in 1831 with six students, only four of whom were regular students studying for ordination on a full-time basis. Of the first six graduates, three served in foreign missions overseas. The needs of the nation still influenced the graduates to go west to Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Texas. Of the first fifty graduates, thirty-six accepted calls westward and only twenty stayed in the Southeast.

Educators sometimes say that their existence and their mission require four things: "friends, faculty, funds, and freshmen." Columbia Seminary would say, "friends, faculty, funds, and *students*."

The numbers and the abilities of the students enrolled in a Presbyterian seminary are the result of a broad partnership committed to a joint venture between the seminary and the church. Students are usually confronted with a call to ministry through a local church and the presbytery. The seminaries help to clarify and nurture that developing call.

During my presidency, students came with a wide range of decisive experiences in their sacred journeys. "Sacred journeys" is a phrase given by Frederick Buechner to his own spiritual and intellectual journey during some defining moments in his life. In a trilogy of books devoted to his learning from life, he describes his response to a call to ministry:

I entered Union Theological Seminary in the fall of 1954. If anyone had told me as little as a year or so earlier that I was going to do such a thing, I would have been no less surprised than if I had been told I was going to enter the Indianapolis 500!...To the degree that I felt woefully inadequate to the task of being whatever I thought a Christian was supposed to be, I needed all the help I could get. So to seminary I went....In the spring of 1953, I had left my job in Lawrence School to be a full-time writer in New York. It was that fall, with my third novel failing to come to life for me, that in some sense my life itself

started to come to life for me — the possibility, at least, of a life in Christ, with Christ, and on some fine day conceivably, even a life for Christ, if I could ever find out what such a life involved, and could find somewhere in myself courage enough, faith enough, craziness and grace enough, to undertake the living of it. So, trailing all those clouds of glory and whatever else, I started setting forth on the daily voyage, aboard a number four Fifth Avenue bus, from my bachelor apartment on Madison Avenue at 74th Street to the seminary at Broadway and 120th....Such skills of reading, writing, and understanding as I picked up during my disheveled and war-interrupted college career, I gathered together and directed toward a more or less single end. I wanted to learn about Christ — about the Old Testament, which had been his Bible, and the New Testament which was the Bible about him; about the history of the Church, which had been founded on the faith that through him God had not only revealed his innermost nature and his purpose for the world, but had released into the world a fierce power to draw people into that nature and adapt them to that purpose!...I wanted to learn about Jesus Christ, and thus put a face on the mystery we call God.⁶

Few of us could describe a call this vividly or experience our application to seminary along this precise path, but many of us, and I am one of them, understand the pull of a call like some great undertow which seems irresistible.

The enrollment at Columbia of M.Div. and M.A.T.S. students averaged 200 plus from 1980 to 1986. The first degree, as the M.Div. was often called, provided the majority of full-time students living on or near the campus. With the explosion in the numbers of persons seeking education beyond the M.Div., however, the majority of students enrolled in degree programs at Columbia by 1980 were not the 200 traditional ministerial students preparing for ordained service. Amazing!

The advanced studies program with D.Min., S.T.D., Th.M., and even the M.A. in theological studies, included 300 and more who were ordained and practicing ministry, and who also practiced lifelong learning. Students studying for degrees beyond the M.Div. level usually stretched the requirements out over four or five years. There were always a few Lutherans, Baptists, and Methodists in the M.Div. degree program but never more than five or ten percent. With the development of the doctor of ministry degree, however, during my presidency there were at least a third in that advanced degree

experience who were from other communions.

The mission of the seminary from 1828 to this day owes its very existence to the first degree, once known as the bachelor of divinity and now the master of divinity degree. Again and again, the Presbyterian church committed to its seminaries the formidable task of educating ministers. Included in their preparation was the development of the mind, the nurture of personal faith and spirituality, and where possible, the resulting competence in the practice of ministry. So the challenge, then and now, is the education of persons who will meet the daunting demands of ministry in the church and in the world.

In 1976, Columbia was moving out of the Vietnam era when a few students enrolled who were avoiding the draft out of conscience, or occasionally, for self-protection. What does a seminary do about enrolling students? For some, it is a matter of "taking whatever washes up on the shore!" as one seminary president put it. Columbia, as a Presbyterian seminary, was and is caught between obligations to the church to be a seminary where the church's candidates for ministry can be prepared, and the pressure to serve as a gatekeeper saving the church and the students from a formidable cluster of damaging experiences.

At times, admission committees are tempted to use educational criteria exclusively in enrollment decisions. In a few extreme cases, it doesn't matter if a person is committed in faith or in mission to the service of Christ in the church or in the world. What matters is the graduate record exam score and the college or university transcript grade point average! This view is too limited.

A priority for Columbia Seminary in 1976 was to develop a process which would enroll persons who had significant promise in ministry and both personal faith in and commitment to serving in Christ's mission through the church. Such a process is not as easy or as simple as it sounds. Decisions were made with all of the information provided through papers and person-to-person evaluations. If only academic criteria were used, there was the danger of a person functioning well in the seminary academic program but not very well with people and not at all in ministry. A few also came with minimal academic credentials but did satisfactory work through deep commitment and good teaching and became effective ministers. These candidates usually had changed in the years since college and had become more deeply committed Christians and Presbyterians! Judgements made in admissions are sometimes faulty, nevertheless, careful and prayerful judgements in each case were usually helpful to all concerned.

The process was strengthened through consultations with committees on ministry in the presbyteries of our constituency and beyond. As reunion developed, the ordination examinations and vows required by the General Assembly helped to focus the process of the church's requirements for ordination.

Here are the basics of a program developed by Charles B. Cousar and Oscar J. Hussel, deans of faculty; T. Erskine Clarke and Peter C. Carruthers, deans of students; Harry H. Barrow, director of admissions; and the president. The program has integrity and is fair to persons applying to the institution, its mission, and to the church at large.

1. Ideally, an enrollment process involves the church at every level of the seminary's relationships and responsibilities. To accomplish that ideal, two differing pieces of information about an applicant proved extremely valuable. One was academic work, and the other was a personal evaluation. In addition, a pilgrimage paper gave a succinct and extremely important picture of a journey of developing faith and commitment.

As important as the materials provided by the applicant and the references listed were, the individual was considered on the basis of personal, face-to-face evaluations. Professors, deans, and the president were involved at every level. All the folders with completed materials were studied prior to the person-to-person meeting. During the two annual conferences on ministry, Kay and I usually hosted an open house for prospective students in our home. Harry H. Barrow often maintained a relationship with a prospective student over a period of two or three years. The deans and the president may well have met and interviewed every first degree student enrolling. I gave much time and thought to each admissions decision. I interviewed on weekends, holidays, and once on Christmas Eve. The majority of time was spent with those applications which made the decision difficult. Shall we or shall we not? The very impressive ones were admitted with enthusiasm and often received one of the honor scholarships. Sometimes, after a series of such interviews, I went home thinking, "God hasn't given up on the church yet!" A few applicants, often with obvious personal and emotional problems, were denied admission, but the decisions were made with sympathy and with the hope that healing could be found. My participation in this process, though demanding a great deal of time and effort, was one of the most satisfying of my experiences as president. I see our graduates today in significant work and am grateful to have had a part in their education.

The most astonishing interview in my experience came during

one of the conferences on ministry. An older applicant assured me that we should not be concerned about the payment of tuition and fees. He was suing the President of the United States and the FBI for harassment, and the three million dollars would be more than enough! By the way, he was not a Presbyterian!

The most recent study of Presbyterian theological institutions, presented at the 1993 General Assembly, realistically faces the situation today:

A. The majority of students are self-selected rather than enlisted by the church for their skills and abilities in ministry.

B. The church as a whole gives low priority to the enlistment for ministry.

C. About one-third of Presbyterian candidates for ministry attend non-Presbyterian institutions.

D. Many students no longer major in the humanities in college and thus need to make up for that through special educational experiences at seminary.

E. With a large percentage of students with financial responsibilities for families and limited resources, seminaries are pressed to raise and disburse large amounts of financial aid.

The report recommends a renewed effort at the congregational level to encourage the most promising candidates to consider a call to ministry. It also recommends a new commitment on the part of the whole church to finance adequately the work of theological institutions of the Presbyterian church. This seventy-two-page report is of tremendous importance to the tasks in theological education of the whole church.

While admission to the graduate degrees is the responsibility of the director of advanced studies and the advanced studies committee, the same general principles apply in practice. A cluster of issues is considered. Could the minister do the work required by the courses involved? Could the minister develop both a significant project in the practice of ministry and a doctoral dissertation of good quality? The academic transcript with the grade point average and the quality of the seminary where the first degree was awarded were considered important indicators of the student's potential. Even so, the evaluation of the applicant's practice of ministry was important, too, since this was a degree in the practice of ministry. Would this educational experience make an impact on that ministry in the future?

The master of theology degree was designed to provide advanced study in one of the theological disciplines. To the amazement of the faculty, it continued to enroll sixty to seventy persons each

year. With the doctor of ministry degree rapidly growing, some of us thought the Th.M. would phase out. Not so!

The doctor of sacred theology degree was administered through the Atlanta Theological Association and the Georgia Association of Pastoral Care. By any measurement, the S.T.D. was a demanding degree; only a few were admitted and even less finished.

2. The enrollment process includes a clarifying component so that students understand the demands of the ministry in clear and realistic ways. Personal interviews can do this, but the various conferences on ministry each year also utilize students, faculty, deans, and the president.

In Presbyterian heritage, we place great emphasis on a call. This runs counter to a culture often found even in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that talks of jobs and tight job markets. A corollary to that is the view that if we had about a thousand less ministers, everyone would have a great job! Such a view implies that the categories of prestige, pay, and power measure the quality of a minister's work. The call of Christ, however, speaks of greatness in terms of "those who serve most!" The *Book of Order*, the *Book of Confessions*, and other official documents clearly reject the job concept and its secular connotations. It is a call in the biblical, theological, and historical perspectives of the church.

Granted, nonparish settings and vocations for ministers are sometimes valid places of fulfilling calls. However, to view them and experience them as we would just another job is damaging, if not fatal, to the practice of ministry.

What about a glut of ministers? That is a complicated issue. There are *never* enough for some needs such as associate pastors for education or youth ministry or evangelism. Often, there seem to be too many who want to have a specialty such as teaching or pastoral counseling.

The primary factor is the health and growth of the church. If our decline in membership and the number of churches continues, there *will* be far too many ministers. The most perceptive analysis I have heard was by President Stair at Union, Richmond, "If the church is in mission, it never has enough ministers. If it is not in mission, it always has too many."

Meetings with students and faculty provide great opportunities to clarify all kinds of issues about the meaning of ministry. Almost always, seminaries admit students who have been nurtured in the faith by a local congregation or an experience in a campus fellowship group, or even a focused service ministry. Many have an evangelical experience as an adult. One of the great hazards involved in coming

to seminary is the way unrealistic and unauthentic expectations accumulate. It is important that these expectations be addressed.

3. The enrollment process provides for diversity and avoids seeking only those who fit some pattern of age, gender, and race. That diversity is not always reflected in the church itself but is essential for the health of the church's life and work today.

Prior to World War II, most students were enrolled directly from college, usually a Presbyterian college. It is different today. One person interviewed for a Columbia faculty position won the hearts of the committee by commenting on his degree from a state university of rather modest reputation. Later, he attended a strong Presbyterian seminary. "The first week I was in seminary," he stated, "I thought every student was a graduate of _____ (name withheld to protect the innocent), and their first question to me was 'what fraternity did you belong to?'"

In 1976 there were only nine women in a class of forty-seven. In 1993, about thirty-five percent are women. During my tenure, the first woman president of the student coordinating council was elected, Gail Perkins. The first African American president was Ralph Aker, and the second, Charles Heyward. Columbia has not only enrolled an increasing number of women but also a small but significant number of African Americans, Asians, and a few Native Americans.

We, of course, were greatly dependent upon the churches of our constituency for helping identify and recruit the persons in these categories. One year, I was intrigued when a synod passed a resolution urging Columbia Theological Seminary to enroll more minority students. The problem for us was, "Where would we find them?" Answer: "The churches of the synod!" The resolution did lead to a new understanding on everyone's part that the churches of a synod like that one would need to identify and interpret a call to ministry to minority students if they were to even think of enrolling in a Presbyterian seminary. It was, indeed, a joint venture. Churches must bring more minorities to a growing faith in Christ and to Presbyterian church membership if we are to have any such candidates.

4. The enrollment process presents a complete and authentic picture of the educational program and its requirements. The requirements are largely based on the requirements of the church for ordination and the competencies needed for effective ministry as we move into the twenty-first century.

The Greek school, a rather grueling eight-week course, took place in the summer before beginning the full seminary curriculum.

It often had an icy shock effect on students. They called themselves "The Fellowship of Suffering." Based on the church's requirement of a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew for use in biblical studies, the experience helps a minister to use the commentaries and other resources available today in Old and New Testament exegesis.

For the majority who will serve as ministers in parish settings of varying kinds, the basics in their practice of ministry are preaching, worship leadership, pastoral care, Christian education, and administrative tasks. Years ago, we thought two out of three would be about all we could expect. However, we are beyond the day when a congregation could say with satisfaction, "Mr. Smith is a good pastor, but he can't preach much!" Or vice versa for that matter!

5. The enrollment process presents a clear picture of the financial requirements during seminary. The large number of older students with families increased steadily after 1976. Columbia was blessed with exceptional faculty and student housing. However, even with spouses working and limited income from part-time work in the city and the churches, the scholarship aid budget increased dramatically. The indebtedness from college loans made the situation worse for older students. The number of advanced studies students who had to secure their tuition and other expenses beyond very limited salaries added a dimension which no one in 1828, 1927, or even 1976, could have imagined.

6. The enrollment process will work best if a close partnership is maintained with the church. The candidates committee (now the committee on preparation for ministry), the presbytery and synod executives, and the committee at the General Assembly level are all extremely important components of the calling, educating, and ordaining of our ministers. The church's increasing insistence on continuing education for all leaders in the church has been validated again and again. Thus, the advanced studies area has enlarged its impact beyond graduate degrees to include non-degree continuing education for ministers and other church leaders. The Lay Institute of Bible and Theology was just beginning in 1986 when I retired and is wonderfully conceived and rapidly developing.

The danger in any of these programs is to develop a feast of good things to which no one comes! On the other hand, with a wide range of choices, the response is quite remarkable, and the lessons learned always valuable.

7. The enrollment process should include a realistic presentation of the opportunities for learning in the city of Atlanta and particularly in Decatur. With 122 churches, the Presbytery of Greater

Atlanta is an ideal source of part-time placement in supervised ministry and part-time employment.

The world is a part of the campus and curriculum of Columbia students. There is important interchange of both faculty and students with institutions throughout the world. The alternative context winter term seminars are amazingly productive. The clinical settings for learning about pastoral counseling are as good as those anywhere. The Georgia Association for Pastoral Care and other certified supervisors are very helpful resources. Grady Hospital is exceptional both in size and in the quality of medicine practiced in a public hospital which has a high number of very poor people in its patient group. A semester as a student chaplain at Grady will educate in a way rarely found on campus! Placements in both ministry courses and in employment are widely available in the Presbyterian churches of the metropolitan Atlanta area and those in our synods. They are a much-needed component of a student's learning to be a minister. They help prepare pastors for a real church in the real world.

8. The enrollment process will present the seminary campus and plant in a favorable but realistic way. Columbia's campus never fails to impress first-time visitors. Most of the buildings are fairly recent in construction and in renovation. More are being developed. Thomas E. Rast of Birmingham led the board in planning and constructing new student and faculty housing. Renovations in Campbell Hall and throughout the campus have been completed and made accessible to persons with physical disabilities.

Atlanta Presbyterians, ministers and members of the supporting Synods of the South Atlantic and the Mid-South support the seminary with funds, faculty, prayers, and students. We are mutually indispensable!

To summarize: God calls, the church validates, and the student responds. That is the Reformed tradition, of course. But the church also creates, guides, and supports the seminary. It should and does expect its seminaries to act with integrity and with honesty in the preparation of ministers in all the various steps of enrollment, education, evaluating, graduating, and calling ministers of Christ.

Internationals

Hundreds of overseas students studied with us and were a major part of the seminary community during my administration. They brought life and witness to the campus community. They came from Brazil, England, Germany, Jamaica, Japan, Korea, Latin America,

Norway, Scotland, South Africa, Taiwan, Zambia, and other overseas countries on one-year scholarships. Most worked on a master of theology degree, but others did special study of significant nature.

Formal relationships with Codrington College, Barbados; Seoul Presbyterian Theological College; Trinity College, Glasgow; United Theological College of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica; and Westminster College, Cambridge, set up ongoing programs with Columbia which led to exchanges of students both here and there.

Professors Wade P. Huie, Jr., and T. Erskine Clarke initiated the program of internationalizing theological education and led it through early days of expansion. George Thompson Brown, professor of World Christianity, participated in the program with both his teaching and his writing. His book, *Christianity in the People's Republic in China*, is considered first-rate. Having grown up in China as a son of missionaries, and serving as Executive Director of Global Mission for the Presbyterian Church U.S., he had worldwide contacts with ecumenical partners.

This poignant story was related by Professor Brown. "In 1980, on my first visit to China with the United Board for Higher Education in Asia, I tried to get permission to stop off in Xuzhou, where I had lived as a boy. This was not permitted even though our train passed through the city on the way from Beijing to Nanjing. However, I did send telegrams from Beijing to two men in Xuzhou whom I thought would remember me. One was a pastor, a colleague of my father, and one, the son of a pastor and elder in the church who had been a boyhood playmate. I gave them the number of the train and the time it was to pass through Xuzhou where it was to stop about fifteen minutes. I said I would be glad to see them if they could come to the station. I did not know whether they would receive the telegrams and if they did, whether they could come to the station. When the train arrived I saw them standing on the platform, waiting. There were just the two of them — nobody else. We talked, wept, laughed, and had a wonderful reunion."

Kay and I participated in a Columbia Seminary sponsored trip to China in 1983 led by Tommy and Mardia Brown. One of the highlights of the trip was meeting the Rev. Peter Tsai in Hangzhou. Pastor Tsai, who studied at Princeton in the 1940's, was the "grand old man of the Presbyterian church" in China prior to "liberation," and is now the chairman of the China Christian Council in his province (Zhejiang). After traveling hard for ten days throughout China we came bone tired to Hangzhou, where we attended an evening service in a large church. Following the service, we were refreshed by fruit and tea, and a welcome. A minister from the

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) asked: "What contribution has the Christian Church of China made to the witness of the world church?" "It is," Pastor Tsai replied, "the witness of a Christian Church which stood up before the world and said, 'Jesus Christ, not Chairman Mao or any earthly ruler, is Lord.'"

Strong ties grew with the seminaries and pastors of the Presbyterian Church in Korea. Professor Brown and Dean Hussel planned three-week summer courses for Korean Presbyterians, ministers, and educators which proved to be very fruitful. With a steady stream of visitors from overseas, the global context of ministry today was greatly enhanced in the minds of both faculty and students.

In 1980 the presidents and deans of the Atlanta Theological Association's four theological schools visited Codrington College and the United Theological College of the West Indies. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the possibilities of a joint venture in cooperative education for students and faculties of these institutions. The evolving programs began through a continuing education two-week seminar in Jamaica attended by Professor Huie. His preliminary discussions with President William Watty and Anglican Bishop Neville DeSousa in Kingston led to a continuing exchange of faculty and students. Professor Huie had long had a deep commitment to a world view of the church. In addition to his participation in the Jamaica program, he taught in Ghana and Korea during his sabbatical leaves. Vee Huie, Wade's wife, shared both the experiences and the commitments involved.

For five years, Professor Huie conducted alternative context courses in Jamaica for Columbia students. The geography of such courses has spread throughout the world. Professor Clarke has now assumed responsibility for much of this program. Without this early vision and effort, the 1980 consultation with West Indies educators and clergy would never have happened.

None of this was as simple as it seemed at first. For example, the first question put to us in Kingston was, at the very least, surprising. "Are you in any way representing the CIA?" The answer, "No, but why do you ask?" It was really a suspicion created by the behavior of various fundamentalist TV evangelists and missionaries from their churches. The fact was that some were, at least in a minor way, acting for the CIA in their inquiries and reports. The idea was quite offensive to the ministers from the West Indies present in that meeting. Efforts to build a sense of trust and partnership ultimately succeeded for all concerned, and the first visiting professor, President William Watty, spent a good sabbatical year at Columbia.

Two unusual things from the memories of that year remain.

President Watty arrived the evening before I was scheduled for a 10:00 A.M. chapel service of worship. I had chosen an obscure passage in Song of Solomon, Chapter 1:6b, "They made me caretaker of the vineyards, but I have not taken care of my own vineyard." We had hoped President Watty would arrive earlier and initiate his ministry with us by leading that service. As I talked with him about this, he not only agreed to preach in chapel but said he would take my text for the sermon. The Old Testament scholar came out in him, and the sermon was excellent. I am embarrassed, for I would have not only done worse with the passage but would have interpreted it quite incorrectly. One is often spared "by the mercy of the Lord"!

Bishop DeSousa spent a sabbatical with us, preaching and teaching on occasion with the permission of the Bishop of Atlanta of the Episcopal church. He certainly helped a Presbyterian seminary and Presbyterian churches with his ministry and found time to participate with the Episcopalians on occasion. Dr. Howard Gregory, the current president of the United Theological College of the West Indies, received his S.T.D. from Columbia and is a friend to many of the faculty and staff at the seminary. Ashley Smith, President William Watty's successor, also spent a sabbatical with us, as did a number of United Theological College faculty members.

Among other helpful visiting professors during this period were two Scotsmen, Stuart McWilliam and David Steel. Retired ministers of the Church of Scotland, they were lifelong friends who fished the streams of the Highlands once a year and spent considerable time debating the merits of their respective divinity schools at the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. Both taught elective courses in worship and preaching. Stuart lectured during the Columbia Forum on worship. Living in a guest apartment in Florida Hall and eating in the Tull Dining Hall, both they and their wives came to know students well and were good friends to many. During a number of years, they not only served Columbia but also Peachtree Presbyterian Church. As "scholars in residence" at Peachtree, they taught adult classes on Sundays and Wednesday evenings and were exceedingly well received by large groups of Peachtree's members. Mrs. Steel and Mrs. McWilliam have both since died, and we grieve for these two wonderful women.

Dr. Steel and Dr. McWilliam returned from Scotland once to participate in the special services marking the completion of an extensive enlargement of the Peachtree sanctuary. There were three services on Sunday morning as usual. Dr. W. Frank Harrington, a distinguished alumnus and great supporter of Columbia Seminary, preached at the 8:30 A.M. service. Becoming ill at the next service



The young seminarian



The young pastor



The Decatur Presbyterian Church years: The Philips family (l-r): Kay, Graham, Davison, Jim, and June



The Columbia Seminary years: Kay and Davison Philips



Susan Harrington, daughter of W. Frank Harrington; C. Benton Kline, Columbia president from 1971-1975; Gay Love, wife of Board chairman J. Erskine Love, Jr.; J. McDowell Richards, president of Columbia from 1932-1971; and Kay Philips at the inaugural dinner for President Philips, Peachtree Presbyterian Church, 1976

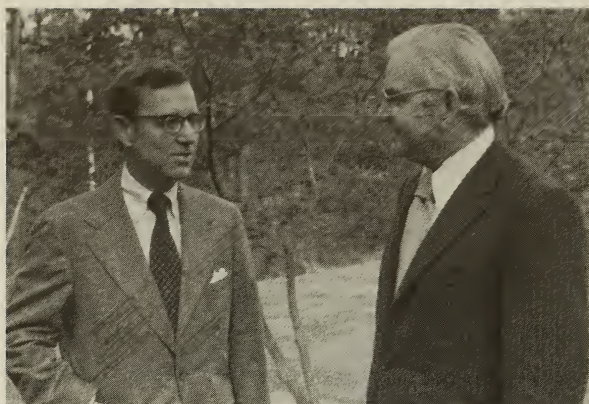


Chairman of Columbia Seminary's Board of Directors toasting Miss C. Virginia Harrison at her retirement in 1961



The faculty, late '70s and early '80s

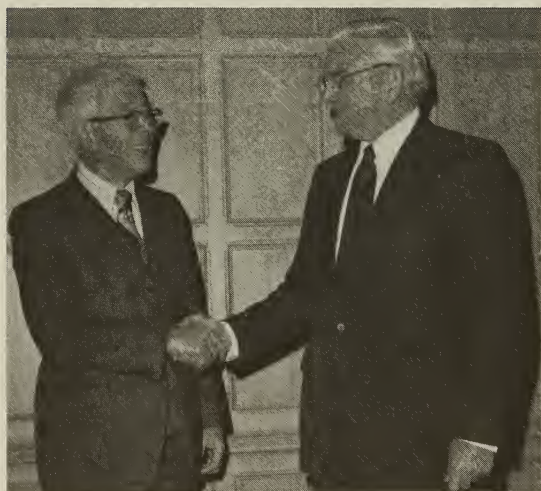




Erskine Love, chair of
the seminary's Board
of Directors, and
President Philips



President Philips
with Shirley
Guthrie, professor
of systematic
theology



Old Testament Professor
Ludwig Dewitz and
President Philips, at the
retirement of Professor
Dewitz



President Philips and faculty at a Christmas luncheon, 1977



Long-time co-workers: J. Davison Philips and Peggy Matthews Rowland

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Cecil Moore, Class of 1962, superintendent of buildings and grounds since 1973



New student apartments in the Village, built in 1978 and 1983



President Emeritus J. Davison Philips, Board Chair John A. Conant, and President Douglas W. Oldenburg



Davison Philips at Columbia with the presidents and deans of the Presbyterian Church (USA) theological institutions, 1986



Columbia
Friendship
Circle
Scholarship
recipients,
fall 1979:
Samuel
Pendergrast,
John Mabray,
Laurie
Hartwell,
Tom Bagley,
Elbert
Darden



Columbia
Friendship
Circle Scholar-
ship recipi-
ents, fall 1985:
Chuck Hasty,
Sarah Speed,
Peter McLain,
Brad Smith,
Scott
Andrews,
Melodie
Wager



Fellowship
recipients,
graduation
1978: Warner
Durnell, Mac
Spann, Dan
Holloway,
Anna Case-
Winters



Neville DeSousa, bishop of Jamaica, was a visiting scholar at Columbia, 1985-86.



Alternative Context class visiting with Lady Bustamante in Kingston, Jamaica, 1986



The Queen and the
Pope at a seminary
Halloween party



Mr. and Mrs. Harry Owens of Tallahassee, Florida,
presented Dr. Philips with a replica of the seminary seal
carved by Mr. Owens, 1978.

began, he was forced to withdraw and receive medical help. As he left, he sent word to the two Scots that one of them must preach at the 11:00 A.M. service. David designated Stuart as the preacher because, he said, "You preach without notes!" The sermon, *The Recovery of Wonder*, was superb! It was one of two Stuart had brought along on this special trip, not expecting to use either one. It was a high point of that special occasion in Peachtree's life.

These few selected items are proof that long before it became a widespread commitment among our theological schools, the internationalizing of theological education was practiced effectively at Columbia.

Advanced Degree Students

Who are these women and men who spend much time, money, and study in additional graduate degrees to the master of divinity they have already earned?

There were two major foci for them. The master of theology degree had students studying in all the traditional theological disciplines. The master of theology in pastoral counseling was particularly well supported by ministers who wanted certification as counselors or expertise in an area where they were being pushed by real people in their ministries. A good part of this degree involved clinical pastoral education courses which enabled students to learn as they practiced ministry in hospitals and other special settings. The key to this learning by doing was supervision. The doctor of sacred theology took these students, who were primarily counselors or professors, along similar patterns in a challenging and difficult program.

The other focus was the doctor of ministry. Almost always, those enrolling were ministers who had been involved in pastorates or in missionary service. They had a minimum of three years of experience, an indispensable asset in their work. At the other extreme, some were in the last ten years of their active service. Invariably, the dissertation project involved some aspect of the ministry they were performing and/or the setting for it. Many were graduates of other seminaries, and a good-sized minority were non-Presbyterians. The programs for groups who studied in such settings as Brewton, Alabama; Decatur, Georgia; Orlando, Florida; Oxford, Mississippi; or Summerville, South Carolina, were designed to provide learning from peers as well as from the instructors.

As the D.Min. enrollment grew, James D. Newsome was called from a pastorate in Paducah, Kentucky, to initiate a new phase in

advanced studies at Columbia. He personified a commitment to advanced study in his own academic and professional work. When he was appointed professor of Old Testament, he was succeeded by another alumnus, W. Douglas Hix, who moved the scope and the quality of the commitment and work of these students to new levels of effectiveness. With a blend of pastoral and academic experience, he was a creative administrator and leader of seminars on ministry. It was under Dr. Hix's leadership that the D.Min. experienced its most dramatic growth.

Last, but not least, the ministers and lay persons coming to seminary for a brief summer seminar and for the January courses were fully qualified as students. Lay people, especially in the Lay Institute, were and are diligent students.

All in all, the flow of students was like a passing parade. The majority finished the course. A few did not. No institution can guarantee 100 percent success. In the years following retirement, the student community has completely rotated, and now I know only a few of the present group. Stay tuned!

Context and Constituency

One of the discoveries made almost immediately by any seminary president is that the quality of the constituency is a very important factor in the health of that institution. The supporting synods who have ownership and control are crucial today to the health of Columbia Theological Seminary. In 1828 they created Columbia for the purpose of "throwing the light of the gospel on the frontiers of the West." Being interpreted today, this means providing ministers for pastorates in the rapidly growing southeastern United States and, indeed, in the world! The supporting synods' churches provide most of the money, the students, the faculty, and the buildings. They are still the real reason for Columbia's existence.

After the Synod of Florida was organized at the end of the nineteenth century, its first major decision was to request and receive partnership with Georgia and South Carolina in the "ownership and control" of Columbia Theological Seminary. Alabama and Mississippi followed, and all were motivated to provide education and preparation for the parish ministry.

The relationship between the church and the seminary is a many-faceted thing and should be valued highly by all concerned. Both church and seminary are necessary in theological education which has as its focus the preparation of ministers for service at every level of the church. Nor can we forget that the seminary was and is a theological resource center for the whole church, lay and clergy alike. Years ago, a delegation from the Synod of Mississippi and Alabama, made up of four or five ministers and elders, met with Dr. Richards at the seminary with concerns about what they called *the theological drift* of the institution. Dr. Richards invited me, as chairman of the board, and also Dr. Felix Gear, dean of the faculty, to be present. We spent several hours talking together. The key point, I believe, had little to do with a broad based theological position. The ordination vows of the faculty, the plan of government, commitments of the seminary, and the vows tenured professors took did not seem to be as important to the group as was a specific view of scripture. They kept pushing Dr. Richards as to whether or not the seminary subscribed to the view that the Bible was without error. They indicated that they thought that the original manuscripts, which we do not

have, were without error! *Error* was a complex and imprecise concept in their minds, it seemed to me. Since we don't have the original manuscripts, it was rather difficult, as it always is, to deal with this issue. Dr. Richards believed, as I do, in the inspiration and authority of the Bible, but he always sought a definition of inerrancy. He would say, "Since there are four different versions of the sign on the cross of Jesus in four different Gospels of the New Testament, what does this mean? Were there four signs there, each with varying words, or was there one sign and the four different versions of it simply capture the essence of its meaning, namely that Jesus was King?" I've always been troubled that none of this discussion seemed to be helpful to anyone. The study of ancient scriptures must not in any way mute the voice of God speaking to us.

One thing stands out in my mind concerning the relationship with the church which is quite painful. The schism which came in the old Presbyterian Church U.S. led to the departure of congregations and ministers to the newly formed Presbyterian Church of America and also to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. The pain continues, as it does in all schism. The fact that it involved graduates of Columbia, friends of many years, and even members of my own family, makes this separation especially difficult.

Trustees

The board of directors at Columbia is more than a group of persons selected for honorary positions. They are capable ministers and elders who direct the mission of the seminary and hold it in trust. Unlike some Presbyterian seminaries where the directors are selected in a self-perpetuating method, all of Columbia's directors are elected by the supporting synods.

A number of outstanding elders and ministers in the Atlanta area were the key to making possible the move to what had become the geographical center of the supporting synods. Some of the bright hopes involved in the move began to fade, however, after three or four years of existence in Decatur. The terrible economic depression of the thirties almost struck a mortal blow. Again, it was the board of directors which kept the seminary going forward. Mr. John Bulow Campbell was a pivotal leader as he had been in guiding the move to Atlanta. Without his leadership and resources, Columbia would have no doubt either vanished from the face of the earth or accepted one of the invitations to merge with other seminaries. In any event, Columbia survived and flourished in Decatur. The mission, the spirit, the theological commitments, the relationship to the church,

and indeed, the quality of students and faculty were all major items in the work of the board of directors.

Although under the rules of the synods, some directors could serve no more than six years and none any longer than nine years, we were able to survive that turnover as new members assumed responsibility. The synods continued to elect to the board able and experienced persons who guided Columbia's life as a servant of the church.

The value of the leadership of the chairpersons of the board during my tenure is beyond measure. J. Erskine Love, Jr., J. Phillips Noble, and William A. Adams were all different in personality, experience, and style. Yet all three led the enormously significant work of the board with great devotion and effectiveness. Erskine Love knew of the seminary through his father's attendance there. During the years he was founding and developing Printpak, a flexible packaging company, Mr. Love came to know and admire President Richards. Phil Noble and Bill Adams were able Presbyterian ministers with extensive experience in the church: John Conant, the present chairperson of the board is, as Erskine Love was, a deeply dedicated elder at Trinity Church in Atlanta with a strong faith and impressive leadership capacity. Both have touched, for good, numerous causes of the Presbyterian church and the city of Atlanta.

A director who listens to the president, gives clear and persuasive counsel, and reflects in word and in deed the indispensable character of a seminary is invaluable. I do give thanks to God "upon every remembrance of them."

During my period of service, the church, the seminary community, and the administration had great satisfaction in adding outstanding women leaders to the board with the election of Dr. Mary Boney Sheats of Agnes Scott College, Deedie Simmons and Emily Wood of the Synod of Florida, and Mary Ellen Alexander of Mississippi. Others have followed. At the same time, we added representatives of minority ethnic groups of great ability and experience in our denomination. The election of these board members was important to both the campus community and the church at large.

The board could, of course, suggest to the synods well-qualified persons to serve on the board. Only once was this a problem. In the Synod of the Southeast, a person could not be approached by the board until after he or she had been actually nominated by the nominations committee of the synod. We gave a good deal of thought and consideration to three persons who would be eligible for the next class of directors from that synod. The names were sent to the chairperson of the institution's committee. Somehow, that person failed to send them on to the nominations committee, which

was the normal procedure. You can imagine how surprised I was to have a phone call from the stated clerk of the synod saying that, since we had made no suggestions, they had elected other persons! Unfortunately, assuming that all was well and that they had been approved at the meeting of the nominations committee, we had already contacted all three in an unofficial way. I had to phone them and tell them what had happened. This was certainly embarrassing!

In the latest version of the plan of government, Columbia developed, as did all synod institutions, a category of "at large" members. Subsequently, three "at large" directors were added to the board. These persons were all Presbyterians and all from our supporting synods. The need for such categories was illustrated when J. Erskine Love, Jr., was rotated off the board by the Synod of the Southeast. He had been an extremely useful director and had a special theological understanding of ministry and of the needs of the church. He not only made significant gifts of money to the seminary but gave of himself without reserve to be of help to presidents, faculty, and students. Although it was possible for us to elect other capable directors, it seemed that the strength of such institutions as Rabun Gap Nacoochee School, Agnes Scott College, Westminster Schools, Presbyterian College, and Princeton Seminary, meant that there were a few directors who, if not bound by the limited terms of a synod, could make a continuing contribution and provide a continuing source of leadership. The Synod of Florida and the Synod of the Mid-South unanimously approved the whole plan of government with this and other changes. In the Synod of the Southeast, two or three persons spoke against it, but the plan was approved by a considerable majority.

The real issue is, "What do we need in directors at Columbia Seminary?" Mary Boney Sheats used to say that college presidents thought they needed "wisdom, work, and wealth from a trustee, and that two out of three were about all you could hope for!" We had a great blend of wisdom, work, and generous giving from our directors. Those who could not provide financial gifts would often provide significant leadership in terms of wisdom and work. Always, their commitment to Christ and the church, their understanding of our mission, and their bringing the church and that mission together was invaluable.

I felt the tremendous support of the board in the call to become president. It continued throughout my tenure at Columbia.

Closely related to all the issues in the relationship to the church has been the matter of candidates for the ministry. As noted earlier, you cannot go out into the world and create and recruit candidates from the graduates of a university or college. Candidates for the ministry can only be produced by the church or by a body related to the church. The “wind of the Spirit blows where it wills,” as the Gospel of John says, and people have different spiritual pilgrimages, but almost always candidates have an encounter with God which comes from an exposure to the life of worship and mission of God’s people in the church. It may be in a campus Christian ministry group, but more likely, it is a local church where, during high school, college and even in adulthood over a long period of years, the call is proclaimed and heard and followed. One aspect of this is that, at long last, the church is far more careful in recommending people for entrance into a theological seminary, let alone for ordination. Local congregations differ. Smaller ones, of course, which have a member applying to seminary are almost trapped by the family nature of a small church, and the sessions consequently feel that it would be disastrous to decline to recommend a person for admittance. Some even say to the seminary that they knew the seminary would turn this person down, and the local church would then be in a position to provide pastoral support to the disappointed applicant.

A seminary lives in tension with the church as to its expectations. On the one hand, churches expect quality graduates, and they determine quality, as I do, as the *ability* to preach, pastor, and administer. One of the early letters I received at Columbia was from the chairman of a pastor nominating committee in a small congregation. He reported that the committee had heard twelve graduates of Columbia Seminary among the group they considered. None could preach a good sermon! What could I say or do? In consultation with professors in the worship and preaching area, we discovered that these graduates included several who came from *that* presbytery and who had been unanimously and enthusiastically recommended to Columbia.

Moreover, the search committee evidently didn’t understand that preaching is a demanding and difficult task. It takes a lifetime of hard and prayerful work to become an effective communicator of the Good News of God in Christ. It takes almost a *miracle* of the Holy Spirit’s guidance to do it. We are forever hearing a select few expert communicators in different categories of television programs with whom we preachers are compared. Sometimes Presbyterians in the

tradition of John Calvin and various nineteenth century theologians become perhaps too logical, academic, and wordy. It sounds as though we speak in strange and unknown tongues with all the special language involved, biblically and theologically. Therefore, one of the unfinished tasks of a theological seminary is to provide specific training in communication, as well as in biblical and theological content. Calvin was a powerful and passionate preacher, but his themes were theologically and biblically organized in rather academic form. Today's most effective preaching, in my opinion, should be written, but should sound like verbal, person to person, conversation. Vivid word pictures, and attention-holding illustrations are also helpful in an age where adults, at best, have a three-minute attention span. Jonathan Edwards' two and one-half hour sermons cannot compete today with TV sound bites and three-minute news items.

What, then, is good communication? However one goes about the teaching of preaching, the theological commitment of the students being taught to communicate is critical. In earlier years Columbia had fundamentalist students who recorded professors' lectures and looked for heresy the way the Pharisees did when they "watched" Jesus and reported what he had said. It was almost impossible to teach them to preach. Fortunately, we no longer have those students, but we do have persons who come to seminary out of a sense of commitment to Jesus Christ. Their experiences today could be described as being evangelical in the best sense of that term. The seminary has the task of cultivating in them the heavenly vision that comes with their evangelical experience. Then when the New Testament question is asked, "What happened to the heavenly vision?" a good response can be that "it is more in focus, it has enlarged its scope, and has maintained the relationship with God who is at the center of it." From my own experience, I know that the windows of my mind were opened somewhat in seminary, but were enlarged in graduate school and in ministry. Such growth in knowledge and understanding makes serving the risen Christ far more healthy, faithful, and, indeed, valid.

The Cultural Scene

Every decade seems to escalate the pace of change. Certainly, the day is gone when a person could retire to a monastery, pull up the drawbridge of the mind, and shut out the world. The context of the life of a seminary today calls for immersion in the life of the world with certain restrictions. That doesn't mean that students can go off

and follow destructive, addictive behavior just to say that they have experienced the world as it is. It doesn't mean that faculties can become almost secular in their work. It does mean that a student who serves a term as a chaplain under supervision at Grady Hospital and experiences Saturday night in the emergency room will be drawn out of a comfortable cave. It means that experiencing the lives of people, whether very poor or very affluent or somewhere in between, brings a sense of reality to preaching and pastoring. It also means that the more we can know about what is happening in the lives of people sitting in pews and worshipping God with us, the more we can minister to their needs in effective ways. The great explosion of activity in the curriculum of Columbia brings the basics of theology, Bible, history, and the practice of ministry into the context of the realities of human existence today. This does not mean that any of the great traditions of learning are de-emphasized. Putting them, however, in the cultural context will bring a new authenticity to their use.

For example, local churches, not denominations, lose members. What has happened? Research today indicates that the great majority of members drift away from the church into a kind of "no religion" secularity. They move around the country. They may have drifted away during college and sometimes do not even think of the church until they want to be married, want to have children baptized, or they get under such pressures in their lives that they reach out desperately for God's help. If you look at persons placed on an inactive roll of a Presbyterian church as I have done in three different situations, very, very few of them go to the new conservative or Pentecostal churches. Less than five percent could be identified as having done so, but great numbers of them go *nowhere* and are involved in *no religion*. When the denomination says that evangelism is one of our two major priorities, it must confront this fact and ask "Will our children have faith?" or "Will our faith have children?" Also, "Will anyone have faith because of the witness and the nurture of the Presbyterian church?" The appointment of professors in ministry and in evangelism and church growth arose in an effort to provide training and insight in these areas.

Conclusion

Are there other contextual factors that impact a seminary? Of course. There can be an economic recession when the seminary no longer receives gifts of real estate or appreciated assets in the numbers needed. During the depression, most of the pledges which

brought Columbia to Decatur in 1927 were divided between the few who paid with great difficulty and those who could not pay at all.

Does politics impact us? Of course. On the world scene, the political changes in Europe and Asia are the most significant of all. However, closer to home, the quality of leadership in the government at every level in the United States makes its impact on the seminary for better or worse.

Does education in public universities and colleges impact a seminary? Of course. In recent years, we have discovered that we could not expect to enroll a large number of students every year who have been trained in Presbyterian colleges. At my own alma mater, Hampden-Sydney College, Bible, Latin, Greek, sociology, philosophy, English, history, mathematics, and science were all required. Many times today our second career students have studied engineering or science and very little liberal arts. Occasionally they have studied law, and occasionally, even medicine or dentistry. They have excellent backgrounds in their fields, but not the background best suited for a theological education. What really pleased me was when someone who came from a small, public institution of less than average academic excellence gradually came alive, graduated with distinction, and brought great satisfaction to those who had worked with him or her.

The great majority of students who came from institutions of quality, highly ranked universities or from Presbyterian colleges, did well at Columbia. Elbert Darden, one of the finest Black students during my tenure, was an outstanding Southwestern Conference basketball player at Rice University who held the conference scoring record for a number of years. He was elected Mr. Rice University. More importantly, he had a degree from a rigorous program. One of our students in an intern program at Highland Park Presbyterian Church near the campus came to know him. They had more than basketball in common, a relationship with Jesus Christ. Under that influence, Elbert responded to a call to ministry and enrolled at Columbia. You can imagine how much he meant to Columbia Seminary during his time with us, and means to the church today.

Perhaps one of the things most often overlooked in considering Columbia's context is its relationship with other educational institutions in Atlanta. The Atlanta Theological Association includes Candler School of Theology, Erskine Theological Seminary, and the Interdenominational Theological Center. These all have exceptional strengths and to share them has been invaluable for each institution. The University Center in Georgia involves fourteen major Atlanta institutions plus the University of Georgia. Begun in 1938 by Emory

University, Georgia Tech, the University of Georgia, Agnes Scott, and Columbia Theological Seminary, it now includes other outstanding institutions. One benefit of working together is the access to the more than fourteen million volumes in the combined libraries. Everyday the libraries circulate books requested by the others. I enjoyed this relationship.

In addition to educational institutions, Atlanta provides excellent economic and cultural resources for its citizens. Its religious life provides a varied laboratory for learning. Presbyterians in the metropolitan area are supportive of Columbia, particularly in contributing students, gifts, and supervised ministry placements. Church employment of youth ministers is also of mutual benefit.

The city of Decatur, population about 20,000, has many characteristics of life in a small town. Stores, shops, offices, and banks are very convenient. Hospitals and medical resources are nearby. City services are excellent. There is a strong political and educational dimension to the city. Decatur and DeKalb County have been very good for Columbia Theological Seminary, and I believe the seminary has been good for Decatur and for DeKalb County. One small evidence of this is a shared use of the seminary athletic field, which one mayor said, "is the equivalent of having another park for the city."

The school system is the key to Decatur's vitality. A few years before the Atlanta city schools were required by court action to desegregate, Decatur voluntarily united its Black and white schools. Since then, our three children and three grandchildren have been in schools where white students are in the minority. The city joined together to sustain public education when there were other options such as starting a private school. The Winnona Park Elementary School and Decatur High School have a large number of seminary children enrolled, as well as missionary families' children from Mission Haven. A teacher at Winnona once spoke with appreciation of all the children of Columbia students and missionaries in her classes. "However," she said, "it means I have a conference with a preacher at least once a week!" I was intrigued one year when the only starter on the Decatur High football team who was white was the son of a seminary professor. Charles Cousar and Ben Kline served as valuable Board of Education members.

And yet, there is more to the context of seminary life than a dynamic urban environment full of cultural, educational, and ecclesiastical resources. The urban problems of crime and poverty which are so related to each other are also painful realities.

An elder at St. Luke's Presbyterian Church, Billy Payne, led the

committee which planned, financed, and constructed a fine, new sanctuary there. On the Sunday afternoon after the dedication, he reportedly said to his wife, "I need another challenge now that this is over." She said, "What do you have in mind?" He replied, "I would like to try to bring the Olympics to Atlanta in 1996."

The Olympic games are coming. This will, of course, remind us that we are part of the whole world, and we must never forget it.

Perhaps the most significant context for theological education in this latter part of the twentieth century is the world. At a breathtaking pace, the changes in the world are creating a paradoxical blend of hope and despair. Good and bad news, progress and calamity all shake us out of complacency. Events seem out of control. War, pestilence, famine, and terror ride across the globe like the four horsemen in Revelation.

So, "Welcome to the world!" More importantly, as Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel."

Learning and Teaching

The Reverend Joan Gray, pastor of the Columbia Presbyterian Church adjacent to the seminary campus, once aptly remarked, "Seminaries must do more than teach ministers *to do*. They help them in many ways to do things and do them fairly well. However, seminaries must also teach ministers *to be*." True! That many-splendored concept of *being* includes such things as spirituality, character, intelligence, and integrity.

How can a person possibly learn how *to be* in ministry without making many false judgements and self-destructive mistakes? T. S. Eliot, in his usual perceptive way, once wrote, "We shared the experience but missed the meaning." Isn't it true that ministers can, in the course of their sacred journey, go through many experiences of worship, mission, and counseling which we share with other people and yet miss the *meaning* of faith and life?

By the grace of God and the help of educational experiences, a minister can and must both *be* and *do*. A minister of Jesus Christ has so much to do, and do well, so many professional duties that overload schedules and calendars, that he or she must be on guard not to miss the meaning of ministry. In the great tradition of the early Church, the apostle Paul writes to Roman Christians in that city of power and wealth and tremendous evil. His appeal begins at Romans 10:13.

For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard and how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

That ringing call to believe involves *sending* those who have *heard* and *believed* and who thus *proclaim* the authentic good news of Christ. The person who does proclaim the message must also be a believer in Christ who is walking through the journey in obedience and

faithfulness. In the biblical frame of reference, making Christ known to the world was preceded by *knowing* Christ. It is always so.

The seminary cannot do everything in the development of the spiritual life of the student. However, in this community of faith, moments of worship, fellowship, and nurture all combine to provide spiritual formation. The one-half hour chapel service each day provides a time when the community gathers in a unity of worship to listen for the Word of God. Most services are led by faculty, students, or other members of the seminary community, with occasional guest preachers or speakers. Once a week throughout the year, senior students provide leadership in their senior service of worship.

The most nurturing experience for me was the Friday chapel service. Seminary presidents are always a little uneasy when they hear that a petition is coming, but I was elated when students came to my office with a petition requesting Friday chapel as a time to share the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. I concurred, as did the worship committee and the faculty. Because the service lasted just thirty minutes, we had to develop a method of serving up to 185 people with reasonable promptness. Thus, we formed a line up the aisle of the chapel, went forward, broke off a piece of bread, and dipped it in either the wine or the grape juice cup. After partaking, we returned to our seats for prayer and thought. It was a continuing source of strength for the journey for me.

One story I remember about chapel communion was from Professor Ludwig Dewitz's first such service as the officiant. It seemed that one of the students assisting inquired about using wine for communion instead of grape juice. Evidently, he was from a church which followed that custom. Dr. Dewitz approved, and wine was used. From his front row pew, Dr. Richards noticed immediately, and according to one of the professors present, seemed unusually restless!

As soon as the service ended, the following conversation ensued:

President Richards: "Dr. Dewitz, who was in charge of this service?"

Professor Dewitz: "I was, Dr. Richards."

Pres. Richards: "By whose authority have you served wine today?"

Prof. Dewitz, obviously stunned, having always used wine in Germany and in England, answered: "By Jesus Christ's authority, Dr. Richards."

Dr. Richards reportedly had no answer but chuckled all the way down the hall to his office!

A senior student asked that we not use wine exclusively. He had come to sobriety in his life some years before through the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and indicated that alcohol of any kind might trigger his very destructive pattern of alcoholism again. We honored this request promptly and gladly.

A seminary must always nurture its theological and biblical commitments if the health of the institution is to be maintained, as well as the health of relationships with the churches. We minister in an age when the old question confronts us, "Is there any Word from the Lord for us today?" There is, and we must faithfully hear and proclaim it.

Homiletics Professor Wade Huie always required that a sermon have a solid, biblical exegetical base before it could be applied relevantly to contemporary life. The quickest way to fail senior preaching was to omit that biblical base, as a few surprised students discovered. The most that can be hoped for at seminary is that students form a pattern of work and an attitude toward scripture and its use in ministry which will nurture them all of their lives. "What is God saying here?" "What is its meaning?" These are real questions we must ask when we turn to the scriptures. There is simply no way that students can learn all the answers to these questions in the brief time they spend in the master of divinity degree program.

Advanced degrees also focus on forming this pattern of dependence on and use of scripture. In the doctor of ministry degree, both a biblical and a theological section is required in the dissertation, in addition to an analysis of a specific project in ministry.

The Bible has been central at Columbia throughout all of its history. At graduation ceremonies back in the nineteenth century, Dr. Howe held up a Bible and said, "Let this book be the basis of your preaching and the center of your life." If, through "the sacred page we seek and find the one who calls to faith, life, and service, we have been fed with the 'bread of heaven.'"

Faculty

As has been indicated, the members of the faculty at Columbia for many years were all members of the Presbyterian Church U.S., now the reunited Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). A few were members of the union presbyteries which related to both major Presbyterian denominations in the United States. Unlike some university divinity schools which are almost completely ecumenical, this gave to the constituency another assurance that we were committed to the theology, polity, and mission of the Presbyterian church. We were

further committed to the purpose of preparing good ministers of Jesus Christ for the Presbyterian church and would continue to do so. There are presently one or two exceptionally gifted teachers at Columbia, such as Professor Walter Brueggemann, who are members of other Reformed bodies.

In the spirit of our Presbyterian commitment, the faculty participated actively in the presbyteries and synods to which they belonged. Unfortunately, it became increasingly difficult to see that every presbytery in these supporting synods had a faculty member from Columbia in it. A number were active in Atlanta Presbytery, by far the largest presbytery in the three supporting synods. Faculty members served on ministry, Christian education, and campus Christian life committees, and also on the councils. They often were resource persons for retreats, synod schools, and youth groups.

As reunion approached, all of us received more and more invitations to preach in the churches of the former United Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Moreover, the synod and the General Assembly increasingly sought the time and work of the faculty. As president, I found that I was preaching somewhere almost every Sunday throughout the year. It was a great privilege to be in various churches in our constituency and overseas as well. It was a special privilege for me to preach not only throughout the United States, but also in Brazil, China, England, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Korea, Scotland, Switzerland and points in between!

As more and more faculty travelled to off-campus seminars and programs, both credit and noncredit for ministers and laypersons, the concept of campus and curriculum was expanded both geographically and ecclesiastically.

For most of my eleven years, at least one faculty member each year was elected a commissioner to the General Assembly of our church. In addition, one student was chosen to serve at the Assembly as a seminary student representative. These students worked long, long hours serving as pages, and helping to carry out logistical tasks for printing reports. They reported that interaction with the many diverse people attending the General Assembly more than compensated them for their hard labor.

During my tenure I recommended thirty-six professors of varying ranks for election or promotion by the board. With rare exceptions, I would happily make these recommendations again. Only ten of the twenty-nine faculty members serving in 1986 were at Columbia when I arrived in January 1976. Two of the ten moved from other assignments to their positions in 1986. Visiting instructors, 106

altogether, came and went. Nine of the 1986 faculty filled new professorships.

The largest increase in faculty came in the pastoral area with the additions of Ben C. Johnson, professor of evangelism and church growth, and Robert H. Ramey, Jr., professor of ministry. Professor Jasper Keith was appointed to the position held for many years by Professor Thomas H. McDill, whose long and distinguished tenure saw the establishment of pastoral care as an important discipline at Columbia. Professor Brian Childs was appointed to fill the position vacated by the untimely death of Professor Theron Nease. The appointment of World Christianity Professor George Thompson Brown, in the historical doctrinal area, was also closely linked to the pastoral area. Barry Davies, instructor in music, made special contributions to the seminary community through his direction of student musicals, usually each spring and fall. Adjunct professors were used for church music and courses on the Black church.

The choice of faculty, and the development of professors' abilities, competency, and effectiveness is crucial for the future of Presbyterian seminaries. Evaluation, sabbaticals, and hard work contribute to this ongoing growth.

Professors write great numbers of articles and books. They balance the research, the writing, and the service in the church with a primary commitment to teaching and learning in the life of the institution and in the lives of students. A good teacher, I truly believe, is not easily found, nor is he or she readily nurtured and supported along the way. When teachers help students identify the real questions in this age of questions, they inspire learning. For example, as the twenty-first century rushes toward us like a great wall of water, full of promise and full of threat, teachers and students together struggle with the age-old question, "What is the meaning of the God whom we know through Jesus Christ?"

Learning How to Learn

Two principal approaches mark the experience of learning at a theological seminary like Columbia: traditional learning and learning by doing under supervision. Two of the three areas of theological study, the historical-doctrinal and the biblical, involve traditional learning. For example, Bible, theology, and history can be taught by a combination of the lecture method and the dialogue technique. Properly done, research is critical to learning these disciplines.

Traditionally, everything in Europe for generations and, indeed

centuries, has been taught through lectures with one-on-one tutoring used occasionally. During my student days at the University of Edinburgh, all the courses were taught this way, because they largely consisted of Bible, theology, and history, with an occasional so-called *practical* course. Increasingly, the latter area has been enlarged. For Ph.D. students much of the learning took place through the old method of discussing dissertation research with a professor or supervisor. Even though this weekly encounter often led to the dreaded assignment of another twenty-five books to be digested before the next meeting, the back and forth discussion was a creative learning experience, as ideas were presented, challenged, revised, or approved.

Today theological learning comes about beyond that received in biblical, theological, and historical data analyzed in class discussions. This is particularly so in theology, biblical exegesis, worship, mission, and pastoral care, which are all tested in supervised ministry placements in parish and chaplaincy settings. Learning which is authentic takes place when these elements are merged into a process which creates a time *to learn by doing under supervision*.

The fact that our denomination requires written ordination exams of Presbyterian ministers is important. For example, church government, as found in the *Book of Order* and the *Directory of Worship*, is one of many essential items to be learned. The greatest single difficulty is that there is simply too little time in the student's program for all these important courses. *Everything* is needed in a seminary curriculum. More and more, it takes three and one-half or four years to complete all the requirements.

The first interview I had after my election as president was with the *Atlanta Constitution* reporter, Billy Cheney Speed, an award winning writer in the field of religion. The thing that she seemed most interested in, and which she developed far more than I had expected, was the commitment to teaching ministers how to learn over a lifetime. I am convinced that lifetime learning is very important; otherwise, spiritually and intellectually, a minister can become as dry and lifeless as a sucked orange. My own experience validates that.

Learning during seminary in actual experiences is required in such courses as the first summer of work in a parish setting or in a hospital chaplaincy. A student is evaluated not only by a supervising pastor who has been prepared by the seminary for this important responsibility, but also by a strong lay committee. I know from personal observation in the churches of Atlanta that a lay committee develops over time, through training and experience, an excellent

capacity for evaluating, nurturing, and guiding future ministers. (It also has the by-product of helping committee members appreciate worship and Christian education in their own churches much more!) This program emerged in a rudimentary form, and was developed further by Professor Jasper N. Keith, a very competent pastoral counselor and teacher. Professors Huie, Hubert Taylor, Thomas Long, and later on Lucy Rose, all participated in training people to evaluate preaching and preachers.

Professors in the worship and preaching area had an extremely exhausting task. Dr. Huie and his colleagues listened to hundreds and hundreds of sermons from students who were learning to preach. They also reviewed hundreds and hundreds of video examples of student work. Painstakingly and carefully, they dealt one-on-one with them, and with the help of student peers evaluated their work. Professor Huie was called by some students "Wade, the Blade" for his sharp analysis of their efforts. Where would you find such person-to-person effort in a large institution?

Professor Huie taught students more than preaching. With their gracious warmth, he and Vee opened their home far more than was expected to gatherings of students and their families. The Huies' hospitality to international students was exceptional. Their four sons came to know seminary students and often participated in volleyball games, touch football, and other sports with them. Both Vee and Wade, who served throughout the denomination as interpreters of world missions, had a great vision for the global Church. All of this meant that they were at the center of the life of the community at Columbia and were caring counselors of many students. This could also be said of the majority of the faculty and especially the senior faculty. Professors Guthrie, Kline, Gonzalez, Ormond, Clarke, Newsome, Keith, Ramey, Carroll, and Barrow are examples of those who opened their offices and homes to students. Other faculty members engaged students on the "field of sports." Harold Prince, longtime librarian, was famous as a terror on the tennis courts to unsuspecting students.

The whole commitment of the seminary to learning by doing under supervision provided ongoing development for many people. Interesting things evolved from this pattern of education. A summer supervised ministry course in a parish, a placement in Grady Hospital's chaplaincy program during the middle year for ten hours a week of supervised pastoral care, and even the yearlong internship, produced a new interest in the *academic courses*. After these experiences, students could see the point in the seminary's rigorous requirements. The process included learning to respond positively to

serious and sometimes critical evaluation, which I believe helped students to learn as nothing else would.

The negative aspect of this learning by doing under supervision method was that students were prone to look upon leading worship or doing counseling as a performance. The question, "How did I do?" was asked in the hope that someone would say, "You did very well," a response that can be fatal if it is the only one a minister receives from acts of ministry. In the long run, the students became stronger preachers and pastors as they came to understand how people learn and grow as a result of preaching, teaching, and counseling.

Even in the pastoral area courses such as church administration, students who had had actual experience guiding and administering programs in a local church had a different attitude when they came back for their senior year, or later on for continuing education. Instead of thinking of it as "something the officers would take care of," they "shared the experience and finally came to see *the meaning*."

The learning in the pastoral area is a comprehensive opportunity to understand the actual practice of ministry in different settings. The whole program of the church including worship and preaching, evangelism, stewardship, education, polity, and pastoral care and counseling is crucial to ministry in today's world and today's church. The large majority of students go into parish settings either as a staff associate or as pastor. Even those who go into other opportunities of ministry find that the experiences of seminary in all of these fields are of vital importance.

The final result of a theological education is to help people *learn how to learn*. From my own experiences as the years went on at Decatur Presbyterian Church, I found that the annual effort to go somewhere for continuing education was vital to my own personal faith and ministry. I had the opportunity through the action of the session, long before it became the normal practice in the call, to receive a grant each year for continuing education. The church seemed willing to encourage anything that would improve their pastor's preaching and administration! It was not nearly so expensive then as it is now to go overseas to St. Andrews, Scotland; the University of Edinburgh; Canterbury, England; or Frankfurt, Germany, or to places here in the United States.

The first overseas seminar Kay and I experienced was at Mansfield College in Oxford, England. My friends at Agnes Scott College, President Wallace M. Alston and Professor Mary Boney Sheats, had attended a three-week seminar led by professors there. They strongly recommended it to us, and it was a wonderful experience. Dr.

George B. Caird presented a series of brilliant lectures. Chairman of New Testament studies at Oxford and a Presbyterian in training and ordination, he gave himself freely in lectures and in extensive discussions everyday. So intense was this experience that an occasional day off to do some touring around was welcomed.

Professor Caird lectured on the Book of Revelation for one of the courses. I still remember a time when he was asked about the meaning of Satan in the New Testament. Forty-five minutes later, he not only had given us all the important biblical material but also had traced it through history and even to the present day. Amazing!

One of my longtime members at Decatur said to me after I'd been back a month or so, "I don't know what happened over there or what you did, but it has made you a better preacher." The hope of all continuing education is to help us grow. Through James D. Newsome, Douglas W. Hix, Robert S. Smith, and Sarah C. Juengst, Columbia Seminary has developed a program of learning for both ministers and laypersons. It is for credit or personal enrichment. All four professors brought to their work a strong commitment to the parish church from significant experience with it. They had personal experience in demanding graduate work beyond their Columbia degrees. Their vision and competence were of crucial importance in this great program which nurtures the leadership of the church.

Learning over a lifetime can be done in different ways. Many persons at the local church or presbytery level, as well as groups of ministers, meet regularly for various programs of discussion and support. Gathering early Saturday morning for breakfast and a brief period of Bible study and prayer with ten ministers was very nurturing for me, and made a difference. We each have to choose our own way, but choose we must if we are to continue to discern the meaning of the experiences of life and especially our own.

Teaching

What qualifies a person to teach at a theological seminary?

Columbia's plan of government summarizes the various qualifications and commitments which are needed. Ordinarily, a professor or administrator must be an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The profile of qualities needed calls for strong commitments to the church's theology, polity, and mission, to Columbia Theological Seminary and its mission, to colleagues, and to students. It requires participation in the governing bodies of the church and particularly the presbyteries of our supporting synods. Qualities of personal integrity are obviously a requirement. The

ideal is a person who has deep theological and personal faith commitments, the ability to work together with colleagues and students in this great task of preparing persons for a lifetime of ministry, and one who shares fully in a community of faith and life.

I came to feel that these commitments and qualities are basic for good teaching at Columbia. For example, we looked once at a person with impeccable academic credentials. Everything was there, the degrees, the publications, and letters of recommendation from educators. Somewhere in the midst of all of it, though, as the committee and I reviewed all these things, one or two questions arose in our minds about the teaching ability of the person. "Can this person really teach? Can he or she teach *these* students in *this* curriculum and can this person participate fully in *this* community of 'faith and learning'?"

Of course, this issue is not unique to theological seminaries. One educator, Martin Anderson, has written a rather scathing book called, *Imposters in the Temple*. His point of view is that students are being charged \$20,000 a year in America's best colleges and need to ask, "What kind of teaching does \$20,000 buy?" His conclusion: "The answer is too often teaching of a scandalously, substandard kind. The problem is not so much that professors don't teach very well, although in some cases that is certainly true, but that a great deal of teaching at the university level has been handed over to people who are unqualified. They are misleadingly called 'teaching assistants.' They, in fact, play a major role in the university classrooms across America. The work they do in the place of real professors is the shame of the academic intellectuals, a shabby secret they are loathe to discuss publicly." He goes on, "A famous professor was critical of his colleagues for 'resenting' teaching since it interfered with research." ⁷

And that's just the introduction! Needless to say, many educators have responded with equally scathing rejections of his analysis. At Columbia Theological Seminary students are largely taught by senior professors from the beginning; professors who, except on rare occasions, grade their own papers. There is every opportunity for personal dialogue and interaction with professors at every level of the learning experience at Columbia.

During my time at Columbia I occasionally taught an elective course in New Testament, at the request of the dean of the faculty, I hasten to say. Ordinarily, it was either the Corinthian correspondence, the Letter to the Philippians, or the Book of Revelation. I enjoyed this. The classes usually had no more than twenty enrolled, so there was an opportunity for very real and personal interaction.

Time was short, two hours once a week, but it was good for me to have that experience. During summer sessions I led ministers' seminars on "Preaching in Advent and Lent," "Evangelism," and "Ministry in Large Churches."

The purpose of teaching is not just to learn the Bible, theology, and church history, as essential as that may be, and as scandalous as the ignorance of these areas is among some ministers. For example, in Bible, Walter Brueggemann and Charles Cousar; in theology, Shirley Guthrie, George Stroup, and Ben Kline; and in history, Catherine Gonzalez and Erskine Clarke, have intense interaction with students beyond lectures. Thus, students are able to articulate an authentic, relevant message in response to the age-old questions. The fortunate students are those who learn how to study the Bible, how to use the original languages of Hebrew and Greek, and especially how to use the commentaries.

Dr. Ludwig Dewitz, now retired, was a professor who gave energy and creativity to the teaching and nurture of students. While never wavering in his expectations that ministers should know the Bible in the original languages, he was a nourishing participant in the life of the seminary community, and in the individual lives of students. His influence was particularly strong among international students, who welcomed him as a guest in many scattered parts of the world. We used to say that Dr. Dewitz travelled well and never once stayed in a hotel! Dr. Dewitz grew up in Germany during the late 1930's as Hitler came to demonic power. Reared in the Lutheran church, baptized and confirmed in it, Dr. DeWitz was a devoted Christian. It was, therefore, a great shock to learn that the Nazis put him in the category of "Jews" because of Jewish ancestry. Though torn by the decision to leave Germany, Dr. Dewitz accepted the invitation of a British missionary training school principal to come to Britain. In so doing, he doubtlessly escaped imprisonment and God only knows what else. He later received his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, working with Professor William F. Albright, and came to Columbia during Dr. Richards' tenure.

Together with his colleague, Professor James Gailey, Dr. Dewitz taught courses in the languages of the ancient Near East to a number of Ph.D. candidates from other institutions. Professor Gailey, after guiding generations of students through the intricacies of Hebrew and Old Testament exegesis, retired in 1981.

There was good teaching and learning in the extension seminars developed throughout our area, when groups of ministers from several presbyteries came together monthly, over a period of nine months, for an intensive two and one-half day seminar. I conducted

the last seminar and learned that such an experience is a good response to the deep desires of many ministers to keep growing in faith, knowledge, and effectiveness. Careful evaluations showed that new learning had taken place that would make a difference in the ministry of these persons in the days ahead.

Furthermore, the ministers found these off-campus seminars significantly less expensive than those held on the seminary campus. One young woman who had graduated early in my presidency told me that it had been worth the time and money involved just to be a part of a group of peers meeting regularly to think, learn together, and nurture each other. She was determined to try to continue that experience throughout her ministry. There is a great loneliness among ministers in the parish, particularly when they are without other ministers on the church staff. We must take the *total* experience of theological education and evaluate it in light of many needs. What is good teaching and what is authentic learning? That is the question.

A much-expanded Columbia Forum provided teaching and learning. Not only were there outstanding lecturers drawn from throughout the world, and many opportunities for discussion with them, but also inspirational worship services. Without the resources of Columbia Presbyterian Church's sanctuary and fellowship hall, none of this would have been possible. Choirs from Atlanta churches came in to assist in worship leadership. Among the preachers were Ernest Campbell, Jim Forbes, and Fred Craddock, each of whom had a different style of preaching. Candler School of Theology Professor Craddock, a popular author and speaker, brought a New Testament specialty as well as one in homiletics. He began his first sermon at the Forum by calling attention to his short stature. He said, "I used to be six feet, six inches tall until I went to teach in a theological school, and they beat me down to five feet, four inches!" Joan Salmon Campbell had a fervent, evangelical note in her preaching and invited us all to come forward and pray with her at the close. I was very proud of some of our senior faculty, who in spite of their reserve at the moment, were among the first to go forward.

The lecturers from around the world varied in style and content. A few were dull, to be honest, but some were most effective. Austin Lovelace in music, Frederick Buechner on the spiritual pilgrimage, and John Leith on Reformed theology were greatly appreciated.

"It's You I Like"

The old philosophers concern with the meaning of life has been developed in many different directions throughout all of the history

of the Christian church. The meaning of life for a minister is a significant issue. More important is insight into the meaning of all the challenges and experiences through which human beings are passing today. Even while we search to know ourselves as God knows us, we need to remind ourselves that to know others, and the meaning of their lives, is also important work of the ministry.

Jean Marie Laskas recently did a feature article in *Life* magazine called, *The Good Life--and Works--of Mr. Rogers*. It is a study of Fred Rogers, a Presbyterian minister and graduate of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, who has developed a long-running program for children on public television called *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood*. He had an amazing insight into the meaning of childrens' lives which could be summarized as, "You're special, no matter what you are on the outside."

Once I observed the hold he has on children as he communicates to them. He was asked to serve on the commission of Greater Atlanta Presbytery to install his friend, the Reverend Dr. George B. Wirth at First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta. He led the pastoral prayer that day. Proceeding with the commission down a long corridor, we saw a four-year-old boy standing and waiting with his mother, obviously hoping to meet Mr. Rogers. As we passed by, we heard him say, "But Mother, I wanted to speak to Mr. Rogers." Mr. Rogers stopped the procession immediately, got down on his knees in front of the boy, and had a nice, quiet, brief conversation with him. Then we proceeded to the mission at hand.

Mr. Rogers refers to his ministry as "just tending soil," the soil of human experience. He was asked to speak, and also to receive his twenty-fifth honorary doctorate, at Boston University during the 1992 commencement. "What, in the end," asks the author of the *Life* magazine article, "was Fred Rogers' message to the Boston University class of 1992?" At the baccalaureate service, he quoted from Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*: "What is essential is invisible to the eye. It's not the honors and the prizes and the fancy outsides of life which ultimately nourish our souls. It is the knowing that we can be trusted, that we never have to fear the truth, that the bedrock of our very being is good stuff." He went on to ask, "What is essential about you that is invisible to the eye?" He paused for a long time and then recited a song from his program called, *It's You I Like*: "It's you I like. It's not the things you wear. It's not the way you do your hair, but it's you I like. The way you are right now. The way deep down inside you, not the things that hide you — not your diplomas, they're just beside you, but it's you I like, every part of you."

The reporter wrote of that moment, "A stillness fell over the

crowd. The people seemed to travel inward looking for some part of themselves that they had long since forgotten or some part they had not yet found or something else entirely. Whatever it was, a lot of them cried." ⁸

In a far different and yet strangely similar way, we have an opportunity to help people in ministry and in life to "travel inward, looking for some part of themselves they had long since forgotten or some part they had not yet found." By the grace of God and the love of God through Jesus Christ, they may find it and in some insightful way, weep for joy. In worship, in pastoral care, and in administrative leadership, we help people find meaning for life in the gospel of God's action in Christ for the world.

It is a great thing to be a minister of Christ. Difficult, complicated, demanding, and yet dealing beyond experience with the meaning of God for those whom He created, whom He loves, and whom He redeems. And even in the classrooms and settings of ministry, that search goes on, shaped, developed, and nourished in the experience we call learning and teaching.

Finances

The January / February 1986 issue of *Southeast Presbyterian Life*, a publication of the Synod of the Southeast, summarized the increasing financial support of Columbia Theological Seminary in this way: "In his ten years as president, Dr. Philips has seen the seminary's enrollment increase from 182 students to 485. The faculty has grown from twenty members to twenty-nine. The number of degree programs has increased from four to six. Columbia's endowment which stood at \$6.2 million in 1976 is now almost \$30 million. The seminary's annual budget rose from \$1 million to this year's \$3.7 million."

These accomplishments sound easy, but they were achieved only by a growing partnership with ministers and congregations in our synods. In a demanding and yet rewarding partnership as we campaigned together, hundreds of meetings were led by volunteers, and hundreds of congregations responded. Believe me, it was one of the experiences which improved my prayer life! The budget, of course, and the endowment have increased even more dramatically under President Oldenburg's administration.

The needed, indeed, the essential development of these resources required:

1. A growing commitment by pastors, presbyteries, synods, and churches in our constituency to the priority of the seminary's mission.

2. Generous annual giving from graduates and individuals. Annual giving is a kind of living endowment that supplements the money received from synod budgets. It has been imperative in a time when gifts for the seminary from governing-body budgets have been in decline, and inflation has continued to erode the value of money.

3. The support by the presbyteries and the synods of occasional capital fund campaigns. These campaigns have been of enormous help in building up endowment, developing new buildings, and providing scholarships for students who have financial needs.

4. Support from graduates of other institutions. The synod ownership and control of Columbia Seminary has produced significant support from persons who had graduated from other institutions. While our own graduates have played critical roles in fund

raising, this support by graduates of other institutions has been very much appreciated.

5. Faculty and students who become increasingly involved in presenting the seminary throughout our constituency. Often traveling in buses to distant presbyteries for a Seminary Sunday service, faculty, administrators, and students have helped accomplish what was needed.

6. Grants from foundations. During my presidency four foundations provided lifesaving grants. These challenge grants required matching funds, and in every campaign in the Synod of the Mid-South, the Synod of Florida, and the Synod of the Southeast, they were essential to help meet our campaign goals. In addition, one foundation's pledge of one million dollars required nine other similar gifts before it would be awarded. It took time to raise the additional millions, and involved gifts of both money and real estate.

7. The president's participation. This is, of course, vital. I quickly discovered that my participation as president in the planning phases, in getting the approval of governing bodies, and in the development of leadership, could not be fully delegated. During our three major campaigns, there was invaluable help in the development office of the seminary through Richard A. Dodds and James F. Dickinson, directors of development. Two loyal graduates, retired ministers Bonneau Dickson and Donald B. Bailey, helped to organize presbytery and synod campaign groups. They also knew how to use the president and to keep me on the run! In the midst of the largest and most essential of these campaigns, that in the Synod of the Southeast, Atlanta Presbytery asked me to seek the moderatorship of the Presbyterian Church, U.S. This involved nomination by the presbytery and an intensive period of preparing for the election. It would also have taken me out of our most important campaign at its most crucial period. After consideration, I made the decision not to run. If I had been elected that year, it would have been great to serve. However, what is past is past, and I think I made the right decision.

8. Hundreds of Presbyterians to serve in campaign organizations. Often, these volunteers were involved in such efforts as the campaigns in synods, presbyteries, and congregations. Presbyterians worked, prayed, and raised millions of dollars in thousands of gifts, and consequently Columbia Seminary's faculty, students, and administration had the resources needed. Buildings such as Campbell Hall and the library were renovated and refurbished. Student apartments, faculty homes, and classrooms were provided. Early in my administration the chapel was extensively renovated and refurbished. It had become rather drab and worn through years of almost

daily use. Erskine Love remarked after an evening convocation, "The light in here is so bad, everybody looks like they are just up from the flu!" Among the improvements was using the large Gothic window, which was in the back of the chapel, as the new setting for the chancel. Stained glass with bright colors was placed in it. New pews, a new floor, and, of course, new lighting were installed. The old Hammond organ was replaced with a Shanz pipe organ especially designed for worship and for congregational singing. It all revitalized worship and the various gatherings using the chapel.

9. That every effort to present the cause of theological education focus on making the need and the mission personal and visible. Students were most effective in this effort.

10. The support of a wonderful group of women in the Columbia Friendship Circle. This was and is of great assistance to the mission of Columbia. In addition to their regular gifts to the scholarship fund, these women interpreted the mission and importance of Columbia to churches in our supporting synods. They prayed regularly for students and faculty. Begun as Friends of Columbia in 1949 by the women of Atlanta Presbytery, the name was changed to Columbia Friendship Circle in 1954 when the group expanded to include members from the five supporting synods. Led by able, devoted, and creative officers, this support was essential to our work.

"We have not because we ask not." Believe me, we asked and often pleaded, but only after the mission of Columbia Seminary had been clearly perceived as of first priority in the church. Once a Presbyterian viewed Columbia as a place of genuine commitments in faith and life to the One who sends us to proclaim the Good News of God, a gift was made.

Thank God—and God's people—for these investments of time and money.

Final Thoughts

As I reflect on my last days at Columbia, these are the things which stand out. Following the election of Douglas W. Oldenburg as Columbia's seventh president in November 1986, I immediately felt that the end of my leadership there was at hand. Between the middle of November and the end of the year, I said the usual good-byes to faculty, staff, students, and constituents and made preparations to move my office. Fortunately, most of the files which had accumulated would remain in the president's office since they dealt with issues and organizations which were ongoing.

During the period between January 1 and June 1, 1987, however, significant relationships with Columbia were maintained. The faculty invited me to preach at the 1987 baccalaureate service, and, of course, I was pleased to do so. In addition, I had an opportunity to teach a course on the Book of Revelation in the Lay Institute during January.

The board and the seminary community planned a remarkable retirement dinner on January 29 through a joint committee. I was very much moved by the words of my good friend, H.G. Pattillo, the master of ceremonies that evening, and from board representatives, Ann Cousins and J. Erskine Love, Jr. Mr. Love's voice was gone because of laryngitis and his words were read by his wife, Gay. (Within a few weeks, Mr. Love died unexpectedly. I still grieve for such a loss.) Charles Cousar spoke for faculty, and Brad Smith and Walter Jones for students and alumni/ae.

I believe the person most affected by my retirement, Peggy Matthews Rowland, was the most widely applauded speaker at the retirement dinner. Among her comments were, "Many of you think Dr. Philips' hobby is golf. It is not. It is writing letters!" We had served together for thirty-one years, and she knew me better than I thought. At Decatur Presbyterian Church and at Columbia Seminary, Peggy was able to do good work in the midst of ringing phones, visits from faculty, and students needing appointments or information. Her influence and service went far beyond writing letters and producing a flood of reports for faculty and board meetings. A person of faith, commitment, and competence to an exceptional degree, she was a warm and effective ambassador for Columbia. I

am greatly in her debt. She has continued her service to Columbia as President Oldenburg's secretary, and he once told me that she was the best thing I left for him at Columbia.

Of course, there was very special meaning for me at the retirement dinner when our son, Jim, spoke for the family. He remembered things I had forgotten. At Montreat, supposedly on vacation, I was often on the porch working over sermon ideas and planning a preaching schedule for the next year! My attendance at football games when any of our three children was involved was a command performance. One very moving and encouraging part of Jim's talk was an affirmation of future ministry taken from Tennyson's *Ulysses*, "Strong in will, to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield....Something ere the end, some work of noble note, may yet be done." Jim went on, "Unlike executives who retire, ministers can't just clean out their desks, turn in the restroom key, and go home. Your church and certainly your family, from your wife Kay to her namesake Kate, all feel that you will have noble things left to do."

There were twelve different speakers who were to use three minutes each. Some of them had a strange sense of time! Only my mother and I wanted the program to go on when I rose to speak of the significance of the tremendous mission of Columbia Theological Seminary which had united us. The most inspiring thing about the dinner was that all those who came together, more than five hundred in number, had had a vital role in that mission during my presidency. They will never be forgotten, nor will the many ways in which they nurtured the seminary during some critical times.

Unfortunately, because our retirement house was rented and we had to give one month's notice, we very much complicated the move of Doug and Claudia Oldenburg to the president's home. We moved the day after Christmas, but the necessary renovations and redecoration on the president's home took several weeks. Within those weeks, the new president had already shown dynamic leadership as he continues to do in the life and work of Columbia.

For the first time in our ministry, Kay and I moved into a home that we owned. We had lived in manses and in the president's home. This was, indeed, a new experience. In 1983, in preparation for retirement, we were fortunate to purchase a home from a friend, Mrs. Laurence E. Mansfield, when she moved to a retirement home. It was a house on a quiet street near downtown Decatur.

It was not easy to decide to stay in Decatur. There were many reasons why we should move to a new place to be totally out of involvement either in the seminary or Decatur Presbyterian Church or even Greater Atlanta Presbytery. In choosing to stay in Decatur,

I made a commitment to avoid, at all costs, meddling in the work of my successors. On the other hand, it was a great pleasure to be able to support them with genuine enthusiasm and to withdraw into being just another retired minister.

Kay was at her best planning the move, arranging our furniture, and decorating the new home. During the first year, we installed a new furnace and air-conditioning system. It made the upstairs bearable during the summer, including a small bedroom used as my office.

Not long after moving, I succumbed to the clarion call of the computer age and bought an IBM PC Junior. Largely self-taught, I gradually became proficient in it to the extent of word processing and filing. If I needed help, I could always call my daughter, June, or my daughter-in-law, Donna, or even my eight-year-old granddaughter, Kate. They were full of authentic information and words of encouragement.

One of the great losses of retirement is not having a secretary. The seminary had been thoughtful enough to say that when I was under great pressure, I could have access to the student secretarial pool. This was not necessary, and it certainly would not have been advisable considering the nature of a lot of correspondence.

That upstairs office turned out to be a quiet place to prepare sermons, write letters, and talk on the telephone. With the exception of attending the Forum lectures, and on occasion teaching courses in the Lay School, and other noncredit classes, I only went to the seminary for the enjoyable ceremonial events such as graduation, opening convocation, the inauguration of a professor, or a coffee hour after a special chapel service. The Columbia Forum, which brought many graduates back to the campus along with other ministers, was always a special delight.

Better than anyone else, I knew the things which seemed to be most satisfying to a president. They included all the basics: the enrollment of students who gave promise for a committed ministry, the appointment and development of faculty and administrative staff, and the enlisting of tremendous support in the church, particularly in the area of our supporting synods. Worship as a community and also throughout the church gave me spiritual resources. Most encouraging was the obvious indication that God was not finished with Columbia as a servant of the Presbyterian church but had even greater and more expanding opportunities for it.

I was certainly no exception when it came to doing the things retired people like to do. We visited family and especially the five grandchildren. We travelled. The board of directors offered Kay and

me a wonderful gift of travel at my retirement. Langdon and Bobbie Flowers, Joe and Jerry Patrick, and Kay and I toured together through Ireland and Scotland, playing golf on famous courses in both countries. I still remember a twelve-year-old junior caddy in Killarney, Ireland, whose name was Mark. Since it was obviously a New Testament name, I asked him, "Where are Matthew, Luke, and John?" He stunned me by saying that they were all at home! He had ten brothers and sisters with biblical names. They were all devout Catholics.

We visited old friends in Scotland and took the sentimental journey to New College up the Mound from Princes Street. The last surviving professor of my graduate school days was Dr. James S. Stewart, and it was a pleasure to visit with him. When Kay and I tried to say again how much he meant during those days and especially as one of the supervising committee on my doctoral dissertation on *The New Testament Concept of Faith*, he would always divert attention from himself as though he were embarrassed by any expression of praise or gratitude. He asked, "Well, what about young James?" How he remembered that he baptized our son in 1947, I do not know. Remarkable!

Perhaps the most surprising factor in this project of recollecting my years as president is that I have a whole cluster of items under the general concept of not what I remembered, but what I learned! I believe I learned to be a better minister of Jesus Christ by being immersed in the preparation of ministers. My commitments as a minister of Jesus Christ in the Presbyterian church were strengthened. The sovereignty of God, the authority of scripture, the reality of Jesus, Lord and Saviour, the unity of the church, and the nurturing experiences of prayer, worship, and sacrament were central to my life and work at Columbia.

Georgia Harkness, one of Methodism's great theologians, is an example of one who suffered because her spiritual life was undernourished. Unlike many other ministers, she concluded that her ten years of what she called "The Dark Night of the Soul," was induced by spiritual pressures. She says, "Sometimes persons of deep spiritual sensitivity, earnestly desiring to trust their lives to God's keeping, find they must cry out as did our Lord, 'My God, why has thou forsaken me?'" Rosemary Skinner Keller, author of *Georgia Harkness, For Such a Time as This*, writes, "Coming to grips with the spiritual depression at the heart of her physical and emotional problems, she realized that her inward relationship with God had been neglected. She did not confront the fragility of her personal response to God until she was forced to do so by the continued downward movement

of the dark night of her soul.”⁹ I can understand her anguish because the stress of schedule and responsibility in my ministry would have been debilitating if I had tried to make it a do-it-yourself project.

I learned much about education which I did not know when I became president. Perhaps I thought I knew, because I had served on Columbia’s Board and also on the Boards of Trustees of Presbyterian College and Agnes Scott College. The Presbyterian flavor of Agnes Scott and Presbyterian College led to a special relationship with their presidents. Wallace M. Alston, Marvin B. Perry, and Ruth Schmidt of Agnes Scott, and Mark Weersing and Kenneth B. Orr of Presbyterian College all became close friends and all helped me as I learned to be a president. They confirmed the concept of a president’s power as the power “to appoint, to budget, to plan, and to persuade.”

The University Center of Georgia was an unexpected learning opportunity. I was chairman of the board for several years, and learned from the presidents and deans as well as from association with the fourteen educational institutions that were members of the Center. All were in metropolitan Atlanta with the exception of the University of Georgia. I became knowledgeable about the large concentration of Black colleges in the Atlanta University Center, the difference between Georgia Institute of Technology and a liberal arts institution such as Agnes Scott, the nature of Georgia State, the largest commuting university in our region, as well as something about the character of Oglethorpe University and the University of Georgia.

I also learned a great deal from being with ministers in their parishes as an occasional preacher or a special speaker for Lenten and Advent services. I learned that when a minister rises and says, “Let us worship God,” or “Let us hear God’s Word,” or “Let us pray,” or even “Let us bring our gifts to God,” that something significant happens in that church and in that city which cannot be duplicated in any other way.

I learned more about the pressures on pastors and their families and their deep commitment to be faithful in ministry in the name of Christ where they are called. I learned more about the tremendous need to nurture them and continually help them to learn and to grow. I learned more about Presbyterians. A few were, as they used to say in North Florida, “pretty sorry.” The majority, however, are trying as best they know how to be faithful and loyal to Christ through the church and to serve in and through it in the world.

From time to time, I was overwhelmed by unexpected financial support for the seminary and especially for students. A widow in Decatur who had always lived with very limited financial resources

was forced to sell her home when the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit came through her street enroute to Avondale. She called to say that she was sending \$500 to be used to help with a scholarship for a student, because she *tithed* the proceeds she received from the sale. I was also very moved by persons who had great demands made upon them for gifts, yet who looked at this small educational institution as having priority in the long list of their contributions. They understood the importance of preparing good and faithful ministers of Jesus Christ for today and for the next rapidly approaching century with all of its challenges and changes. For the first time in her history, Columbia received single gifts of one million dollars and more.

I learned what it means to work creatively together with a staff of sixty-five persons. Those who taught in the classroom, those who worked in the offices, those who kept the buildings in repair, the water and the electricity working and the campus functioning, and those who cooked the food all had important roles in the mission of Columbia.

I learned how to deal with disappointment in people. This included one or two persons appointed to teach or an occasional board member who was indifferent to the responsibilities involved. Other disappointments included a student who wasted most opportunities, becoming very self-serving and anything but a servant in the New Testament sense. I was astonished when a neighbor angrily protested the building of four faculty townhomes, because it would compete with apartments and homes in Decatur. And, of course, if one is honest, there are disappointments in one's own performance. In the mad rush of schedule and draining activity, there seems to be so little time to think, to prepare lectures and sermons, or to do justice to various meetings. I learned, however, that the grace of God covers all human failure and that "goodness and mercy" follow us all the days of our lives.

After viewing the inauguration of President Clinton, I remembered my own taking of vows in November 1976. Those vows were probably one hundred years old:

In reliance upon the grace and wisdom of God,
In obedience to the call of God through His Church,
I, James Davison Philips, assume the office of president of
Columbia Theological Seminary.

I promise to fulfill the responsibilities thereof
In the strength and pattern of the ministry of the Lord of the
Church.

In the presence of God and these witnesses, I do solemnly subscribe

The Confession of Faith, catechisms and the other standards of government, discipline, and worship of the Presbyterian Church in the United States,

As a just summary of the doctrines contained in the Bible
And promise and engage not to advocate

Any doctrine contrary to the scriptures as interpreted in these standards

While I continue as president in this seminary.

I pray that to some degree, by "the mercies of God," the record will show that I kept these vows.

By the grace of God and the call of the Presbyterian church, April 1993, marked the fiftieth anniversary of my ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. It is, indeed, a great opportunity to invest a life in ministry in obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ.

I remember times of great challenge and pressure for me at Columbia when the old promises of God would surface in my mind. I would hear them, not as trite and empty words, but as God's word to me. Jesus said, "Go, and make disciples of all nations...and lo, I am with you always." "Let us not grow weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart." "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." Even the most familiar of all verses took on new meaning, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want....He leads me....He restores me....Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

In the great tradition of New Testament apostles, I remembered that it is by the grace of God that men and women are called into ministry. I could resonate with the words of Paul, "Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart!" And, I never did, even in the most stressful times.

You couldn't ask for more than that, could you?

Endnotes

- ¹ Frederick Buechner, *Now and Then* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 2.
- ² William Childs Robinson, *Columbia Theological Seminary and the Southern Presbyterian Church* (Decatur, Georgia: NP, 1931), 11.
- ³ Much of the material in this section is from Louis C. LaMotte, *Colored Light* (Richmond, Virginia: published for the author, Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1937), and George T. Howe, "History of Columbia Theological Seminary" in *Memorial Volume of the Semi-Centennial of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina* (Columbia: Presbyterian Publishing House, 1884).
- ⁴ Lamotte, *Colored Light*, 219.
- ⁵ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), 43.
- ⁶ Buechner, *Now and Then*, 4ff.
- ⁷ Martin Anderson, *Imposters in the Temple* (Simon and Schuster, 1992), 47ff. Cf. "What! Me Teach? I'm A Professor," *Wall Street Journal*, 8 Sept. 1992.
- ⁸ Jean Marie Laskas, "The Good Life--and Works--of Mr. Rogers," *Life*, Nov. 1992, 72-82.
- ⁹ Rosemary Skinner Keller, *Georgia Harkness, For Such a Time as This* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).

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Davison Philips came to the presidency of Columbia Theological Seminary as one who had been an outstanding student, a loyal leader among the alumni, a faithful and effective member and chairman of the board of directors, and above all a distinguished pastor and church leader.

His eleven years as president were marked by growth and change in the size and composition of the student body, in the number and diversity of the faculty, and in the budgets, endowment, and other resources. The degree programs for ministers in preparation and for ministers already in service were enhanced and extended. The relationship of Columbia to the reunited Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and to the church around the world was strengthened.

Davison evidenced throughout his presidency a serious commitment to the academic excellence of the seminary, a lively concern for the enlistment and education and continuing support of the best women and men for the ministry of the church, a tireless devotion to the building of the financial strength of the institution, and a dedication to the well-being of the church and the community.

His account of his life at Columbia is a welcome reminder of his lasting influence in the life of the Presbyterian church and in the lives of countless people who have been enriched by his ministry. His service to the seminary and to the cause of theological education has been extraordinary.

C. BENTON KLINE
*Professor and President Emeritus
Columbia Theological Seminary*

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